

The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh



August 12, 2017

Dear Friends in Christ,

We mourn for our country this evening. The most violent public assembly of hate groups in decades has taken place yesterday and today in Charlottesville, Virginia. The deaths and injuries are the direct result of the white nationalist ideology at the core of the gathering.

Some of those espousing these views see their movement as a holy crusade, and even invoke a Christian God to support their efforts. Yet, nothing could be further from the love of Christ in His Cross than the politics of racial purity.

Our Lord founded His Church to be *a Kingdom of priests to our God, gathered from every family, language, people and nation* (Revelation 5: 9-10). Any suggestion that God desires the triumph of any race over others is a slander against the Holy Spirit, and must be rejected by Christians of every party.

In the wake of this terrible day, I call upon the churches to be obedient to our calling: pray fervently for justice, reconciliation, and peace. Pray that God will turn all our hearts toward Him and to one another. Then, beloved sisters and brothers, act on what you pray for. Reach out to those who may fear or suspect you. Particularly in this time, I ask my white brothers and sisters humbly to offer to African American and other people of color an expression of sorrow and repentance, not only on our behalf, but on behalf of those who do not know they need to repent. Above all, let us remember that *perfect love casts out fear* (1 John 4:18) and let us act accordingly.

I thank God that, through the fledgling movement we are calling the *Church Without Walls*, the Holy Spirit is building bridges to racial unity among many Christian bodies in our region. I ask us to pray that the work of these groups, and other efforts from many people of good will, may be strengthened and may spread, and that God may use us mightily in healing the legacy of racism that underlies so much of our history.

In the meantime, pray for the dead and the wounded in Charlottesville, and for all those whose actions and words have injured or offended. We pray that we may have the grace to see what God would next have us do in the furtherance of His Kingdom, and that we may have the courage and power to accomplish it.

Faithfully your bishop,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dorsey", written in a cursive style.

(The Rt. Rev.) Dorsey W.M. McConnell, D.D.

