



Christian Church in South Carolina
and
Christian Church in North Carolina

JOINT PASTORAL LETTER
June 19, 2015

Dear Church:

As you are aware, late Wednesday evening a young man shot and killed nine members of Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Among those killed was the congregation's senior pastor, the Rev. Clementa Pinckney. Others killed were congregation pastor, the Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, a relative of our own Rev. Sekinah Hamlin; the Rev. Daniel Simmons, age 74; Susie Jackson, age 87; Ethel Lance, age 70; Myra Thompson, wife of the Rev. Anthony Thompson, vicar of Holy Trinity Reformed Episcopal Church; Rev. Depayne Middleton Doctor, mother of four children; Tywanza Sanders, age 26, and a recent college graduate; and Cynthia Hurd, a Charleston County Public Library employee. We were all devastated to learn of this tragic and horrible event.

All murder is tragic. Mass murder bears much more horror when so many victims are senselessly killed so quickly. When mass murder happens in a place of worship and prayer our sense of well-being is threatened. But, our hope for humanity is at stake when murder is motivated by racism!

With tender hearts and deepest pain, we hear the words of the Hebrew prophet, Jeremiah:

I hurt with the hurt of my people. I mourn and am overcome with grief.
Is there no medicine...? Is there no physician there? Why is there no healing
for the wounds of my people? If only my head were a pool of water and my
eyes a fountain of tears, I would weep day and night for all my people who
have been slaughtered. (Jeremiah 8:24-25 - 9:1)

The congregation of Mother Emanuel AME Church is a precious expression of the body of Christ and as it is written, "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). Right now we suffer with them and extend our compassion towards them with open hearts knowing that as the Church we have traveled a similar road in the early and later decades of the 20th century when racism tore apart our country and churches. We learned then that silence and inaction was not helpful or faithful.

As Disciples of Christ we must take bolder steps to become the anti-racist/pro-reconciling church we are called to be, and end the systemic racism that causes such hatred and violence. There is no easy fix to racism. We must start--NOW! We cannot wait.

Therefore, we call upon all Disciples of Christ congregation in the regions of the Carolinas to enter into a period of eight days of prayer, June 21-28, as we petition the Creator of every human life.

During these eight days of prayer, we urge each congregation to pray during worship services, classes, meetings, small group gatherings, and as families and individuals, for:

- ~ the Charleston families who grieve the death of loved ones,
- ~ the leaders and members of the Mother Emanuel AME Church,
- ~ the leaders of the AME Denomination,
- ~ all African American churches,
- ~ the City of Charleston,
- ~ the political leaders of our cities, states and country,
- ~ the leaders of our congregational, regional and general expressions of church;

we pray for:

- ~ boldness in naming the sin of racism in our lives, our church and our country,
- ~ boldness in confronting racism, in all its manifestations,
- ~ boldness in confronting hatred and violence, in all its manifestations;

we pray for:

- ~ peace and forgiveness,
- ~ guidance and fortitude in following God's leading our next steps.

Please join the church in these eight days of prayer.

In the name of Jesus, the Christ,

Rev. Sotello Long
Regional Minister

Rev. John M. Richardson
Regional Minister

Eleanor Davis
Regional Moderator

Reginald Stroud
Regional Moderator

Harold Samuel
Vice Moderator

Rev. Dr. William Barber II
Moderator Elect