

Hadwen Park Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

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January 9, 2021

Dear Saints of the Church of Jesus Christ,

This year and these days have found us pummeled with fear, sadness, and a sense that our world is shaking under our feet. It is. The Pastors of this church have been talking and praying and worked together to send this to you as we face our future.

We must take a stand that is not necessarily political but is moral. It is what Jesus did and we yearn to follow him more perfectly. What is happening in our government right now is immoral and unethical. Lying, particularly when one has power over others, was not right(eous) when the Ten Commandments were written and it is not right(eous) in 2020/21. We believe that our country is divided due to the lies and manipulation of this administration and we would call it that way were the leaders Republican, Democrat, Independent, or other. Wrong is wrong and leading people to violence with lies is doubly unrighteous and evil.

Many of you along with us, have cried as we saw a confederate flag marched through the Capitol building. It aches to know that this battle, fought so long ago, that killed more Americans in war than any other, is not over. That calls us to righteousness and justice in the name of our beloved Creator.

What happened at the capitol has absolutely no comparison with the Black Lives Matter work that our church supports with approval from our Church Council, led by the Missions and Social Justice Committee. We urge any of you who wonder about that to read. Read the history of oppression and dehumanization of men, women and children black or brown who have been lynched, tortured and denied full access to economic, educational and social opportunity, systemically. We can say the past is the past but we know from what happened on Wednesday, January 6, 2021 that white supremacists, nationalists, and other groups work every day to steal the rights(eousness) of our brothers and sisters. Better yet, have the courage to speak to Pastor Sarah, the mother of two brown sons. Talk to Al Green, our gentle giant leader who has suffered racial profiling and the denial of many rights based on the color of his skin. For history please let us know your questions and we have a book list, prepared by Social Justice and Missions. The book list is not political, it is history.

Both pastors have marched protesting for human rights for women, LGBT, black and brown people. We have never experienced the organizers of these groups inciting violence, rather they begged for decorum that the message might be heard. We have also experienced, in these protests, police presence that seemed overkill. Obviously white supremacist rioters are not as dangerous (systemically) as black and brown protesters as we witnessed the lack of police presence at the center of our democracy! That fact, alone, convinces us more than any other, that we MUST continue marching for human rights daily! There is implicit bias in our police, courts, economics and elected officials! We have much work ahead.

From Genesis to Revelation, God's work has been that the creation, so beautifully and diversely created, must be allowed and encouraged to flourish. Please read the parables to see what Jesus said. Remember the parable about the landowner who paid the people who worked for one hour the same as the workers who were there for the whole day. What each of them received was based on what they needed not the hours they worked! What do you think Jesus is saying to us?

We believe Jesus is saying that every human being should have what he or she needs to eat, learn, love, and flourish. If that means that we, who worked all day, must SHARE (the money came from God in the first place), then so be it.

What do we do with our depression that lingers and aches in the middle of the night? We go back and read what Jesus said, who is God's best representation of the kin-dom of heaven. He did not hang out with rich people; he came for the poor, the needy, the afflicted, the imprisoned, the oppressed. Read his first speech in the temple; go find it. Many of you have met with the pastors and friends in virtual meetings to pray and talk. Call each other, as you do so well, and be willing to talk about this. Sugar coating and avoiding what is going on in the streets of our country does not create change!

We are learning every day that following God's word is often very different than the day that we chose Christianity and church attendance. Yet, we trust a God who will never leave us nor forsake us and who sent Jesus, not to show us a life in utopia or to give us a rubber stamp to eternal life, but a survival recipe for living in the real and difficult world. Jesus always found time to get away and pray. Have you?

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus, by Helen H. Lemmel, 1922

Oh soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness you see?
There's light when we look at the Savior and life more abundant and free.
Turn your eyes upon Jesus; look full in his wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of God's glory and grace.

"If peace means a willingness to be exploited economically, dominated politically, humiliated and segregated, I don't want peace. If peace means being complacently adjusted to a deadening status quo, I don't want peace. If peace means keeping my mouth shut in the midst of injustice and evil, I don't want it. Peace is not simply the absence of conflict, but the existence of justice for all people." - Excerpt from Dr. King's "When Peace Becomes Obnoxious" speech delivered on March 18, 1956 at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.

Jesus was a peacemaker, not a peacekeeper. We cannot be quiet or stand idly by while God's children suffer with racism, hunger, hatred and abuse. We must MAKE a new peace.

In the name of Jesus,

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