

**JOHN KNOX PRESBYTERY**  
**RESPONSE TO GEORGE FLOYD DEATH**

Our nation is currently in the grip of racially charged demonstrations at a level unseen in this country in over 50 years. The angry protests are the result of a long -standing tolerance for inequality and abuse of persons of color, particularly African Americans. The catalyst of these rallies and riots is the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These demonstrations serve to call us as people of faith to examine our own hearts and decide whether we continue to tolerate such evil or whether we stand for change.

For the last 6-8 months several congregations, as well as the Council of John Knox Presbytery, have been discussing signing a commitment to be designated Matthew 25 organizations. That designation carries with it a pledge to follow the teachings of Jesus which call for us to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the imprisoned. Jesus refers to this as doing good “for the least of these who are members of my family.” (Matthew 25:40) The Matthew 25 program breaks these into three categories of emphasis, building congregational vitality, eradicating systemic poverty, and dismantling structural racism.

Three incidents have either happened or come to light within recent weeks which demonstrate the racism which is too deeply imbedded in our systems and structures. Ahmaud Arbery was killed in a confrontation with private citizens who thought the young black man jogging in their neighborhood might be a burglary suspect. Breonna Taylor an African American working as a local EMT was shot and killed by police who broke into her home looking for her boyfriend who was suspected of selling narcotics. George Floyd was arrested for purchasing merchandise at a local store and paying with a counterfeit \$20 bill. While being arrested a police officer held his knee on Floyd’s neck for over 8 minutes, during which Floyd died of asphyxia. Even if all three were guilty of the suspected crimes, (and we don’t know that answer) none of those crimes carry a punishment of death. The most glaring common factor of these three is they are all African American. And these are just three recent examples of many, many more such abuses against people of color by our social systems. Certainly, not all police officers are racists, but lack of consequences for those who do act inappropriately has stoked anger within the black community and those who cherish equal justice under the law.

The leaders of John Knox Presbytery affirm that if anyone is guilty of a crime, they should be held accountable through due process. But we also declare that no one should have to die unjustly because of the color of their skin. The needless death of George Floyd calls us to action, as inspired by the words of Matthew 25 to dismantle structural racism. We hope that you will stand with us.

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