During the month of June, our country has seen a tidal wave of protests asserting that Black Lives Matter. It is a rally cry in response to very recent extrajudicial killings of black people, especially by police officers, including Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, but it is a movement that has been more than a few years in the making.

Racism and white supremacy have been embedded in church and society for hundreds of years. Statements from the Church have been used as the moral and theological justification for violence against black and brown bodies, including genocide, and the enslavement of Africans and their descendants in this country.

It is critical that Trinity Presbyterian Church, as a particular congregation within the larger body of Christ, take a moral and theological stand and say, unequivocally, that Black Lives Matter.

**Black Lives Matter[[1]](#footnote-1)**

As a community of faith, we affirm the inherent dignity and worth of each person, as created and beloved children of God. However, the society in which we live does not accord equal worth to each person.

When we witness systemic racism, implicit bias, and continued lynchings of black people, we question whether our society truly values black lives. We affirm the particular dignity, beauty, gifts, and worth of black people. Thus we publicly name that Black Lives Matter.

Our statement that “Black Lives Matter” is not an endorsement of the national Black Lives Matter organization. That organization—and its local affiliates—do express core values that resonate with Christian values, including empathy, the necessity of family-friendly spaces, and intergenerational cooperation. But it also advocates for a range of policies on contentious issues about which Session has not taken a position. Thus our affirmation that Black Lives Matter is not an organizational endorsement, but is Trinity’s affirmation that the lives of black people matter to God and to us.

**Seeking to be an Anti-Racist Community of Faith**

While it is critical for us to make this affirmation, we also recognize that our words are not enough. The church has been complicit in building and upholding systems of white supremacy and oppression for many different groups of people. It is not enough to name the inherent value and worth of all of those beloved children of God, we also must commit to the work of anti-racism as we seek to confess our sin and work toward the coming kindom of God, which we will recognize in the flourishing of the full diversity of God’s people, a beloved community marked by peace, justice, reconciliation, and wholeness for all.

To that end, we commit to the following practices:

* The practice of Learning Together: We must first seek better understanding of the problem and the ways in which we contribute to it. We are grateful to the scholars and individuals who have put forth the mental and emotional labor to provide resources for this learning.
  + We will encourage our church community to utilize these resources through recommendations, including a collection of anti-racism resources in the church library.
  + We will encourage group studies and conversations.
  + We will support our members and church leaders’ participation in anti-racism trainings.
  + We will ask all actively serving church Teaching and Ruling Elders to commit to studying at least one recommended resource (book, podcast series, or other form of media) each year.
* The practice of Self-Examination: As we learn more about racism and privilege, it is important for us to examine ourselves honestly and continually, individually and as a community of faith.
  + We will encourage self-examination through discussion opportunities within the church.
  + We will examine our own church structures and culture to see where we have benefitted from, where we are complicit, and where we are perpetuating white supremacy.
  + We will take a posture of humility, receiving with gratitude critique when we fall short, and understanding that this learning and self-examination is an ongoing journey.
* The practice of Confession
  + As we learn about the ways we participate in systems of oppression, we will name them and provide space to confess our sin in worship together.
  + When appropriate, we will confess in the public sphere.
* The practice of Reconciliation
  + We will, individually and corporately, commit to building authentic relationships within the black community.
  + As we listen to our black and brown siblings, we will heed invitations to participate in practices of reconciliation.
* The practice of Advocacy
  + As we learn together, examine ourselves, confess our sin, and work towards reconciliation, we will speak out against white supremacy, injustice, and violence against black and brown people.
  + We will listen to our black and brown siblings to amplify their voices, show up when invited, use our voice and privilege when it is helpful to do so, and support the public witness and advocacy avenues led by members of impacted communities.

We know that there will be times when we fall short, but the fear of our failures will not stop us from participating in the struggle for justice. We will seek and rely upon God’s grace, following the path made known to us by Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

1. These two paragraphs paraphrase the good work of our siblings at Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, IL. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)