

Until then, as the Church, we are called to offer living examples for others to see and to follow, and to offer a life-giving witness that provides real and lasting hope. As a Church, we have what the world does not have. His name is Jesus. We belong to the One the world does not fully know. His name is Christ. We also have been called to live in ways that show the world who this Jesus is and how much we and our world are loved by Him.

Knowing there are no simple answers to the questions we face and that no superficial responses will result in a cure to troubles that go deep, allow me to offer the following as first steps we can all take, as followers of Jesus, to address our nation's racial tension.

Pray. We can never pray too often or too much. Pray for God to intervene. Pray for the family of George Floyd. Pray for the Black community. Pray for our police officers, including the ones directly involved in this tragic event. Pray for our nation's leaders. Pray for race relations to be strengthened, and for all citizens of our world to acknowledge our common citizenship as children of the One God. Pray for those who have peacefully offered protests, in order that their voices be heard. Pray for those who have destroyed and looted properties, asking for justice to lead them to Jesus. Pray for our own hearts to change, and for God, ultimately, to hear our prayers and for our nations and our world to turn our hearts toward Him.

Confess. As much as it is always easier to point to someone else, that is not where the solution starts. It is the first step in any recovery program. It is the most important step in bringing about lasting change. Even if the part we have played is insignificant, even if we believe we have played no part at all, it is essential that we confess that we may have, even without knowing it, played a part, "by what we have done and by what we have left undone." There is a problem. It will not go away on its own. We need help. We need to acknowledge and confess our need.

Listen. This may be the most difficult step to take. It often is for me. It is much easier to speak and to offer counsel than it is to listen to and learn from and

accept counsel when it comes. I will never know what it feels like to be a Black man in this country. I have grown up with a calm and calming atmosphere and life. Before rushing to judgment, we need to listen and to learn and to do our best to "walk a mile" in our brother's or sister's shoes. We can all learn from each other, but only as we listen to what the other has to say.

Speak up. This should come natural for us as Lutheran Christians. Martin Luther spoke up when he saw abuse happening in the name of God. It is not wrong to protest. But do it peacefully. Regardless of where we find ourselves politically, we have a responsibility to speak up when we see things that are not right and to do so in ways that are helpful. We also have the reassurance, when we do, that we are not alone. God speaks through us. God will speak through you. But it will only happen as you speak up for what is right and speak out against what is wrong.

Love. This is at the heart of the Christian faith. This is at the heart of the Christian life. How can we say we love God if we fail to love others? The Bible is clear. We cannot. Love for God goes hand in hand with love for our neighbor. We need to work hard at loving those we see, even if we see in them things we do not love. There are no conditions in God's love for us. There must be no conditions in our love for others.

If we are to be faithful to the call we have in Jesus, as individuals and as a denomination, we must be faithful in our response to others by loving them as God has first loved us. God's love is always and only found in relationships. And relationships, if they are of God, are always and only rooted in love. Let us work to build relationships with each other, with our sisters and brothers of other races and colors, and to ground and root those relationships in Christ.

I invite you to join me in following Jesus, by taking these first and most important steps in addressing our world's racial tension: pray, confess, listen, speak up and love. Until our Lord returns, this is and will always be the calling we share.

In Christ,

Bishop Dan