

Stop Killing Black and Brown People:

A Plea and Call to Action from the

Mission Possible committee of Valley Community Presbyterian Church - May 2020

Their names were George Floyd, Philando Castile, and Jamar Clark. Each of these Black men was killed by police officers in the Twin Cities in recent memory. Their names represent three lives that could have continued to flourish, but for the individual officers who failed to protect and serve them, and due to a society, which protects whiteness at the expense of people of color. Their names represent Black and brown individuals throughout this country who have been killed by police and white terrorists while jogging, sitting in their living rooms, sleeping in their beds, and walking on the street. Their names represent generations of Black and brown families whose trauma, grief and pain have been thrust into the public sphere with unrelenting regularity.

To the police departments who are charged to protect and serve all of us: end the routine killing of Black and brown people. Policies that disproportionately criminalize BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color) folks must be eliminated, in collaboration with BIPOC community leaders and public safety experts. We know you are charged to protect the whole community, so we plead with you to live out your charge.

To the white citizens of the Twin Cities, the state of Minnesota, and the United states: reflect upon what you are doing to help support the killing of Black and brown people. Call for an end to the ongoing terrorism and death perpetrated by groups and individuals. Recognize those acts were and are supported by past and present laws, culture, and systemic practices, broadly created and ranging from our federal government to our neighborhood churches. We must measure society's moral effectiveness not by the intentions of those in power, but by the impact of those acts on our communities. We plead with our fellow white citizens to explore their own practices, attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate white supremacy, so that we may disrupt and dismantle those practices for the sake of our society.

As a majority white congregation, Valley will continue to discern how we are positioned to work against the individual and institutional racism that is killing or threatening our BIPOC members, neighbors, and friends. The Mission Possible committee pledges to re-explore our own church community's history, practices, attitudes, and behaviors that have persisted to the detriment of people of color, past and present.

Valley has made efforts toward stopping the negative impacts of racism by partnering with 21st Century Academy. By investing in the Academy's K-12 North Minneapolis Scholars, Valley supports the Academy's mission to help close the opportunity gap. The ongoing tragedies like those in the news in recent weeks are reminders that our work will continue as long as racism threatens us and our neighbors.

Praying may look different to each of us, but praying is always active. Some of us fold our hands and petition God with words. Some of us march in the streets to protest injustice. Some of us pledge money and volunteer time with our mission partners who are meeting people's needs. Wherever you are, staying safe and healthy, please pray in all the ways you can for the family of George Floyd. Pray in all the ways you can for the officers who were involved in his murder. Pray in all the ways you can for the police department and the city of Minneapolis, for Minnesota and for our country. Use your words. Use your voice. Use your influence. Use your time.

At Valley, we work to Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Lives to God. As Christians, we follow the way and the wisdom of Jesus Christ, who beckons us to love our neighbors as ourselves. We enter this fight for justice with our BIPOC siblings imperfectly, and we lean on the Holy Spirit working through our community and our partners to guide our discernment, our actions, and our resources.

With hope for the future,

Mission Possible committee members: Jennifer Biggs (co-chair), Craig Gottschalk (co-chair), Arlene Freeberg, Mark Freeman, Arlen Havrilla, Lotti Matkovits, Andrew Pitan, Janet Triplett, & Nancy Husnik

Valley staff: Rev. Richard Buller, Phillip Romine, & Sheila Sheldon