

A Letter to Western Pennsylvanians from United Methodists Who Love Them

“Shout loudly; don’t hold back;
Raise your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their crime,
To the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1, CEB).

Beloved friends in Christ,

The prophet’s cry to Israel addresses us where we are right now: we must shout out today, and announce to our own people *our* crime of racism. In our baptismal vows, each one of us promises to “accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.” We cannot deny the evil and injustice of the oppression Black and Brown people face every day. We must reflect seriously on biases we have, assumptions we hold, and privileges we enjoy related to systematic racism. During this season of Pentecost the Spirit calls us to lament, to repent, and to act.

LAMENT:

Friends, can we feel the anguish George Floyd felt with a knee being firmly pressed on his neck, crying out for his mother, gasping in vain for breath? Can we feel the terror Ahmaud Arbery felt as he was hunted down on the streets? Can we feel the astonished betrayal Breonna Taylor felt as she was shot down in her own home? Can we weep with their friends and families over these tragic killings? In Jesus’ name, we lament today for and with these, and many, many other victims of the racial injustice our sinful indifference perpetuates.

REPENT:

O God, we shout loudly and repent of the sin of racism in our lives. We invite our fellow believers to join us as together we attempt to put our preconceived notions aside. We must admit there is something called “white privilege.” According to the United Methodist *Book of Resolutions* (Paragraph 3376), “White, European Americans enjoy a wide range of privileges that are denied to persons of color in our society.” White privilege assumes that you can purchase a home wherever you choose; white privilege expects courteous service in stores and restaurants; white privilege has no fear of police. We cannot allow white privilege to blunt our awareness and concern that Black and Brown people cannot make these assumptions. How white Americans choose to

[respond](#) to racism can make a profound difference. We repent for being comfortable in positions of privilege, while people of color still experience racism every day.

ACT:

If we desire to be like Jesus, then we must not only lament and repent, but act in the world. Pray daily for justice. Pray about what you can do. Then let that prayer become action. Therefore, let us:

- Rise against police brutality in all forms; call on our government officials to institute policing reform and create County Civilian-Police Review Boards.
- Speak out against a criminal justice system that is often neither blind nor just.
- Follow Black leaders, activists, and community organizers on social media and share their content.
- Find and support Black-owned businesses in your community.
- Recognize the inequity of our educational system - does your school district have a designated equity director? Are your teachers offered racial-cultural sensitivity training? Have you reviewed your school district's curriculum for accurate history and racial education?
- Participate in non-violent protests and marches that are taking place and open your ears and heart to hear the pain and anguish of your Black and Brown neighbors.
- Purchase and read books on racial justice and anti-racism by Black authors. Connect online for additional [resources](#).

**This letter was written by clergy from the Pittsburgh District.*

Together in ministry,

Rev. David L. Ewing

Rev. Dr. Kimberly Greway

Rev. Dawn Hand

Rev. Chris Morgan

Rev. Kelly J. Smith

Rev. Bruce E. Stollings

Rev. Dr. Steven Tuell

Elizabeth Lennox, Pittsburgh
Rev Michael Airgood. Washington
Rev Doug A Dyson, Franklin
Rev. B.T. Gilligan, Butler
Rev. Chad Bogdewic, Pittsburgh
Patricia L. Bogdewic, Pittsburgh
Sarah Gallagher, Greensburg
Richard E. Wilson, Pittsburgh
Rev. Scott Shaffer, Pittsburgh
Jeanna- Mar Simmons Pittsburgh
Rev. Dr. Jeffrey D. Sterling, Pittsburgh
Dana Peles, Johnstown
Rev. Karen S. Slusser, Pittsburgh
Rev. Beth L. Nelson, Pittsburgh
Barbara Briggs, Butler
Rev. Thomas Q. Strandburg, Pittsburgh
Rev. Larry Homitsky, Pittsburgh
Rev. Pamela S. Gardner, Pittsburgh
Amanda Gilligan, Greensburg
Katherine Snook Pittsburgh
Rev. Erik Hoeke, Washington
Rev. Anais Hussian, Pittsburgh
Ronald Snook, Pittsburgh
Rev. Sandra Marsh-McClain, Pittsburgh
Molly McCullough, Pittsburgh
Rev. Brandon J. Moore, Pittsburgh
Rev. Lota Jones. Pittsburgh
Rev. Anthony R.C. Hita, Franklin District
Rev. Lynette S. Moran, Greensburg
Joseph Tobin
Sean Lewis, Pittsburgh
Rev. Bethany Rosler, Kane
Nancy C. Smith, Greensburg
Rev. Matthew Price, Pittsburgh
Rev. Stephanie Gottschalk, Pittsburgh
Barry Lewis, Pittsburgh
Sally Bell, Pittsburgh
Rev. Renee' Mikell, Pittsburgh
Kenneth Hendrata, Pittsburgh
Joseph Yurko, Greensburg

Donna Burkhart, Erie
Thomas Greway, Pittsburgh
Susan Stollings, Pittsburgh
Rev Ed Schoeneck, Greensburg
Pastor Mary C. Stewart, Erie-Meadville
Esther Rees, Greensburg
Jackie Campbell, Washington
Mary Beth Zollars, Pittsburgh
Rev. Tom Barnicott, Pittsburgh
Rachel Bouchard
Dr. Dean Patterson, Pittsburgh
Peggy Hines
Rev. Dr. David L. Morse, Greensburg
Jan Crossland, Pittsburgh
Jan Galbreath, Pittsburgh
Rev. Dr. Scott Gallagher, Greensburg
Rev. Dawn Lynn Check, Greensburg
Rev. Alan J Morrison, Erie-Meadville
Amanda Dabbs
Gregory McDonald, Pittsburgh
Rev. Thomas L. Funk, Pittsburgh
Rebecca T Haines, Erie-Meadville
Michael DiMonte, Pittsburgh
Barbara Cooley Thaw, Pittsburgh
Rev. Angelique O. Bradford, Butler
Karen Tobias, Pittsburgh
Amanda Greenland, Pittsburgh
Gail and Leon Harper, Pittsburgh
Bud Wise, Pittsburgh
Lisa Fao, Connellsville
Rev. Scott Lawrence, Washington
Rev. Ginger A. Thomas, Pittsburgh
Barbara Greway, Pittsburgh
Nancy Silay, Pittsburgh
Glenda Merritt, Franklin
Mary Rishel, Pittsburgh
Kim Rhoton, Pittsburgh
Nancy Patterson, Pittsburgh
Helen McAfoos, Pittsburgh
Rev. Eric Park, Butler

Lee Tobin McClain, Greensburg
Rev. Diane Olson, Connellsville
Mary Polley, Pittsburgh
Rev. Michael B. Coats, Butler
Rev. Dylan Parson, Pittsburgh
Erica Rushing, Erie-Meadville
Sandy Danley, Pittsburgh
Sarah Adkins, Butler
Rev. Erica Wellner, Indiana
Pastor Karen Prescott, Greensburg
Robert and Marcia Coleman
Rev. Kendra Balliet, Indiana
Rev Dennis E. Lawton, Pittsburgh
Joshua Demi, Pittsburgh
Rev. RoBear Bob Wilson, Pittsburgh
Joyce Miller, Pittsburgh District
Lisa Hoeke, Washington
Eric Oliver, Erie-Meadville
Rev. Dr. Duk Hee Han, Erie-Meadville District
Eun Young Han, Erie Meadville
Mark Lenz, Pittsburgh
Deb Brown
Rev. Connie B. Hoeke, Erie-Meadville
Rev. Dr. Thomas E. Hoeke, Erie-Meadville
Barbara Ruprecht, Pittsburgh
Jenn Morgan, Pittsburgh
Dana Stainbrook, Washington
Rev, Kellie Wild, Pittsburgh
Jan Lovich, Pittsburgh
Rev. Anette Gerber, Butler
Tom Luketich, Pittsburgh
Linda G. Carter, Pittsburgh
David Stains, Johnstown
Rev. Tom Parkinson, Pittsburgh
Kara Snyder-Keane, Pittsburgh
LuAnn Mudrak, Pittsburgh
Rev. Howard Burrell, Pittsburgh
Roberta Mehta, Pittsburgh
Elizabeth Martinez, Pittsburgh
Melissa Markowski, Pittsburgh

Rachel Cline
J Martinez, Pittsburgh
Sandy Danley, Pittsburgh
Heather Shoffstall, Pittsburgh
Susan Keppen, Butler
Maurnell Girman, Pittsburgh
Jayne Bishop
Jodee Kirchner, Butler
Rev. Peggy Osborne, Pittsburgh
RoseMary Highman, Pittsburgh
Linda Williams, Pittsburgh
Lauren Mussitsch, Pittsburgh
Rev. William R. LaVelle, Jr., Butler
Claudia Steele - Washington
Janice Nash, Pittsburgh
Doris Houtz
Kathy Belcastro, Pittsburgh
Terry Shaffer, Franklin
Karen Snavely, Butler
Rev. Alyce Weaver Dunn, Pittsburgh
Cathy, Greensburg
Richard Hill, Greensburg
Cherise Sandrock, Pittsburgh
Brent Sandrock, Pittsburgh
Dr. Epryl King, Greensburg
Chris Gilbert, Greensburg
Pvmacioce@gmail.com, Pittsburgh
Nancy S Jones. Greensburg
Steven Stanek, Pittsburgh
Rachel Wagner, Greensburg
Sara Nute Dickey, Pittsburgh
Joseph Deible, Greensburg
Mary Ann Weber, Greensburg
Sandy Danley, Pittsburgh
Rev. Daniel Miller, Butler
Mallori McDowell
Kimball Smith, Greensburg
Cathy Clarke, Pittsburgh
Carol Radi, Pittsburgh
George & Karen Ramsey, Pittsburgh

Hannah Loughman, Butler
Rev. Katrina M. Laude, Indiana
Joshua Popson, Pittsburgh
Lisa Fortier, Pittsburgh
Carol & Theron Myers, Pittsburgh
Sharon Gallagher, Greensburg
Craig Tatro & Maria DePasquale, Greensburg
Joyce and Ron Hoellein, Pittsburgh
Betsy Monheim Pittsburgh
Brenda Wagner, Greensburg
Samuel Wagner, Greensburg
Erin Wagner, Greensburg
Lynn Cunningham, Greensburg
Richard Rishel, Pittsburgh
Mitchell Hortert, Pittsburgh
Rev. Russel Shuluga, Pittsburgh
Sandy Mickey, Butler
Susan Jeffries, Butler
Janet Black, Butler
Becky Miller, Kane
Dawn Landman
Derek Platt, Connellsville
Maria Wesley, Pittsburgh
Rev. Tom Parkinson, Pittsburgh
Ellen Kelley
Pam Honeychurch, Pittsburgh
Myra Mann, Pittsburgh
Megan DelGrosso, Pittsburgh
Johnathan Burnett, Pittsburgh
Danielle Fannin, Butler
Lynne Johnson Pittsburgh
Valerie Wilson, Pittsburgh
Rev. Kelley M. Schanely, Washington
Rev. Joseph A. Hajdu, Pittsburgh
Jim Canfield, Pittsburgh
Monica Kao, Pittsburgh
Aleata Noe-Weis, Pittsburgh
Rev. Carole Bergman, Jefferson
Tracy Merrick, Pittsburgh
Robert Moffat, Greensburg

Dara Sterling, Pittsburgh
Amy Wagner, Pittsburgh
Amanda Greenland, Pittsburgh
Rev. Sarah Daniels Roncolato, Erie-Meadville
Louanne Baily, Pittsburgh
Erwin Kerr, Pittsburgh
Lyndall Huggler, Pittsburgh
Marsha Resinol
Rev. Deborah A. Dennick-Ream, Pittsburgh
Josephine N Magill
Elisha Schoeneck, Greensburg
Martha Boward, Pittsburgh
Otis E. McAliley, Pittsburgh
Rev. Tracy J Cox, Pittsburgh
Robert Maddock, Pittsburgh
Rev. Dr. Susan Moudry, Pittsburgh
Rev. Don Cook, Pittsburgh
Marjorie Fiscus, Pittsburgh
Rev. Ken Miller, Butler
Ronna Sue Cole, Pittsburgh
Ron Gardner, Indiana
Edmund Bach, Indiana
Dianne Glave, Pittsburgh
Rev. John R. Wilson, Pittsburgh
Pat Morris, Butler
Debra L. Mason, Washington
Thomas C. Wagner, Pittsburgh
Debbie Moskal, Washington
Rev. Judy Winston Thomas, Pittsburgh
Deryl K. Larsen, Franklin
Cathy Speicher, Pittsburgh
Carlen Blackstone, Pittsburgh
Maria Orton, Pittsburgh
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Rev. Dr. Cyndi Bloise, Pittsburgh
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Marie Hunt, Pittsburgh
Rose Salazar King
Susan Boring, Indiana
Jack Moffett, Pittsburgh

Rev. Debbie Hills
Rev. Erica Wellner, Indiana
Clark Remington, Pittsburgh
Barbara Bailey, Washington
Gloria D. Stephan, Pittsburgh
Rich Cummings, Pittsburgh
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Rev. Jay F. Sterling, Butler
Natalie Marionneaux, Johnstown
Diane Curry Randolph, Pittsburgh
Amy Zeminski, Pittsburgh
Jayson Zeminski, Pittsburgh
Dennis Hunt, Pittsburgh
Warren R. Kinneer, Pittsburgh
Suzanne McLaughlin, Pittsburgh
Sherry Digruttolo, Pittsburgh
Charles Digruttolo, Pittsburgh
Rev Myles T Bradley, Pittsburgh
Ben Blinn, Pittsburgh
Brian Bauknight, Pittsburgh
Laura Powell, Pittsburgh
Mary Jayne Kozlowski, Pittsburgh
Kristine Swaney, Pittsburgh
Mike Swaney, Pittsburgh
Francie Robb, Pittsburgh
Bill Utterback, Pittsburgh
Susie Moffett, Pittsburgh
Felicity Moffett, Pittsburgh
Jane Black, Pittsburgh
Peggy Ward, Pittsburgh
Genevieve Moffett, Pittsburgh
Stephen Nimmo
Sally Ondrejko
Jodee Kirchner, Butler
Pat Morris, Butler
Mary Ruth Yarrison, Pittsburgh
Rev. Susan Hoover, Washington
Dianne Wainwright

Glen Tieman
Janice Weaver, Greensburg
Judy Caric, Greensburg
David Seitz
Glenna Wilson, Pittsburgh
Don Blinn Jr, Pittsburgh
Peggy Hooker Pittsburgh
Nancy J Ross, Pittsburgh
Jim Lombardi, Pittsburgh
Nancy J Ross, Pittsburgh
Deacon Keith G. Kondrich, Foundation of HOPE
Jody Raeford, Pittsburgh, Foundation of HOPE
Rev. Karen Hecht, Pittsburgh
Ellen Campbell, Franklin
Russ Campbell, Franklin
Sara Wrona, Indiana
Joshua Demi
Rev. Pamela Ramsey
Deborah Hill, Indiana
Rev. Gretchen Hulse, Greensburg
Rev. James A. Cannistraci, Kane
Mary Ellen Anken, Indiana
James Gascoine, Pittsburgh
Linda Ziino
Rev. Deb Groeger, Johnstown
Emily Summers, Pittsburgh
Christina Mottura, Indiana
Margaret Young
Michael E. Stephan, Pittsburgh
Cindy Gray, Erie/Meadville
Genevieve Moffett, Pittsburgh
Dianne Wainwright
Sharon Slater, Pittsburgh
Nancy S Jones. Greensburg