

Prayer of Lament and Repentance offered by Rev. Ginger E. Gaines-Cirelli

June 19, 2020

Juneteenth Observance

Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

You have told us, O Lord, what is good. You have shown us, O Lord, what to do. You have revealed to us, O Lord, our call and capacity as humans.

Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with you. Love you and love our neighbor. Live and love and heal and give and serve and forgive like our savior, Jesus Christ, proclaiming the present and future Kin-dom. You have told us, shown us, revealed to us everything we need to live in freedom and in peace.

But we have rejected you, opting instead for idols of privilege and respectability, of power and control. We have allowed fear and lies to curtail the expansive capacity for love, generosity, and mutuality you intend for human life. And we are destroying one another and destroying ourselves and destroying the whole of creation as result.

We cry out today in lament, grief and weariness for the suffering of your beloved children whose beautiful black and brown skin has marked them in this racist society not for honor but for profiling and suspicion, not for admiration but for dismissal and invisibility, not for care but for violence. How long, O Lord, will black bodies continue to be found hanging on trees in our city parks? How long will we allow black bodies to be the currency fueling prisons for profit? How long will black siblings be humiliated, assaulted, and shot in our streets with impunity? How long will black mothers and fathers fear for their children's safety every single day because the color of their skin, their daily prayer that their child's name doesn't become a hashtag? How long will black and brown children have to be given the "talk" to try to keep them safe? How long will precious children live in a world in which their internalized racism makes them struggle to love their black or brown bodies? How long will the stereotypes and gaslighting and codified hatred and white supremacist terrorist organizations continue—so feebly challenged, if challenged at all? How long will the killing of black mother's sons be less important than the killing of white mother's sons? We cry out to you, Lord God, with broken hearts, for the suffering of your people. O Lord, come to our assistance. Make haste to help us!

"Whiteness" has become both a shield and a weapon that many of us don't recognize we wield. In ignorance and arrogance, those of us who are white continue to be stubborn and slow to

acknowledge the past and present realities of systemic racism or to take responsibility for our transgressions, aggressions, and complicity in systems that harm and seek to dehumanize black and brown siblings. We who are the perpetrators of this violence lay ourselves out before you today, O God, repenting for our sin and begging for mercy and for your grace as we endeavor to become anti-racist. And all of us pray for your compassion and forgiveness for the ways that we harm ourselves and others and live lives that are smaller than we're made for. We need your help, O Lord. Come to our assistance, make haste to help us.

Restore us to your vision for our lives, merciful God, and guide us in the ways of mutuality, dignity, and peace with justice. Help us truly understand that no one is free until all are free. Help us rise united... and may we love as you intend.

In the name of the God who was, who is, and who is to come. Amen.