

More Than Thoughts and Prayers.

Written by Pastor Peter Hanson, *Lead Pastor*

Note: This was not the blog post I had planned to write. I'll write more about my sabbatical time of renewal in the coming weeks. Pr. Peter

On Monday, George Floyd, an African American man, died in the custody of Minneapolis Police, having been arrested for an alleged act of forgery. A deeply disturbing video recorded by a bystander showed an officer kneeling on the unarmed man's neck for several minutes while he struggled to breathe. While the four officers who were at the scene have since been fired by the MPD, at the time of this writing no arrests had yet been made.*

I personally grieve the brutal murder of George Floyd, a beloved child of God. While I know that I cannot speak for all of us, I know that others at Ctk join me in sensing anger, rage, heartbrokenness and lament that is being expressed in so many ways throughout the Twin Cities and beyond. We condemn the systemic racism that is so deeply entrenched throughout our nation and which we can no longer ignore within our local communities.

I must admit some of the dilemmas I feel as I write about this. While I am tired of white people like me feeling the need to each make our own profound declarations, people of color whom I love and respect have asked me to use my privilege to amplify their grief, their fear, their cries for justice. While I have been complicit in abstraction, what one friend calls the "preferred weapon of the white church," I know we need to be more specific about our response to issues of racial injustice, putting our money where our values are, placing our bodies in spaces that allow us to listen directly to our siblings of color and other marginalized communities. And while I know that some think that churches should not venture into areas deemed too "political," I believe that the Biblical witness says otherwise. The people of God have always been called to love our neighbors, and to show a particular care for the vulnerable among us.

Christ the King is blessed with a certain measure of diversity—particularly with folks from the Latinx and Liberian communities. At the same time, we are a congregation which is predominantly made up of white people. I believe God is calling Christ the King to confess how we have benefited both directly and indirectly from our white privilege, to repent of the ways we participate in and perpetuate the systemic racism we have inherited, and to commit ourselves to exposing and dismantling white supremacy among us and around us.

Church, we have both internal and external work to do. We need to continue to pray with and for those people most affected by the killing of George Floyd, as well as those communities for whom his murder has triggered pent up frustration and anger about generations of inequality.

We need to educate ourselves about systemic racism and white privilege. However, a one-off Forum or seasonal book study is not enough. We need to humbly seek how we are being called to confess our sins of the past and to repent of the ways we continue to perpetuate such injustice. As council president Isaac Warner says in his own reflection below, we need to commit ourselves not simply to rejecting racism, we need to become “actively anti-racist.”

At the same time, we need to work beyond ourselves, individually and collectively connecting more closely with people of color and other marginalized communities. We need to go to them, actively listening to them in their own voices, within their own contexts. We need invest both time and monetary resources in organizations which are led by people of color, who are leading the way in confronting and dismantling racism and other injustices.

It begins with prayer, but it must not end there.

Pastor Peter Hanson

*Since this writing, former MPD officer Derek Chauvin was taken into custody and charged with murder.