

June 12, 2020

A Statement from the Sylvan Hills Shepherds:

We mourn with our family members and our country as we have again been reminded of the fall of man and how the evils of sin that causes attitudes and actions of some to execute inhumane treatment of our brothers and sisters with black and brown skin. The world is not as it should be. We see your pain and lament this together.

To our black and brown skinned family members, we love you and stand with each of you as you display strength and determination to persist for treatment you've inherited as God's children. Your hurt and cries do not go unnoticed. We are in solidarity with you in Christ's name. We are reminded of our covenant to Love like Jesus. Christ implores us, "love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

As God's people, we petition our Creator for mercy, peace, and hope. We pray for humility to be honest to God and ourselves. As we've prayed this prayer and discerned what to say, we acknowledge words alone are not enough. We must educate ourselves and others. We must listen to understand with hearts of empathy. We must be more courageous than cautious. This means examining what we're doing now and admitting that we can do better in our pursuit of equality as God created it.

As Christ's Church, we rebuke sin that fosters hatred and maltreatment of any kind against humanity. God so loves the world. We pray to burn with the same love. We will no longer be neutral or lukewarm. As those who have been given the responsibility to care for Christ's flock, we are committed to resist attitudes or actions of oppression that cast shadows on any of God's people. Far too long our country and Christian community allowed fear to remain as a stronghold. The enemy wants us to remain silent. We will no longer feed fear by our silence.

To the church family, we invite all of us to take a closer look at our hearts. As those you entrust to lead, we commit to examination of how as individuals and a church family we are modeling and teaching the truths of God that we proclaim. Are we treating others as we want to be treated? (Matt. 7:12) Are we loving our neighbor as ourselves? (Mark 12:31) Are we mourning with those who mourn? (Rom. 12:15) Are we patient and kind, void of envy or pride? (I Cor. 13:4)

As we carry the name of Christ, we will no longer be satisfied conforming to the patterns of this world by defining people by a color, but rather join in celebrating the beauty and depth of complexions in God's image. We actively seek the Spirit's renewal through dialogue that transforms our minds and hearts. We vow to lament together, learn together, love together, act together, and grow together. Join us as we pray for generous listening in a holy space where empathy grows. Join as we have important, albeit at times uncomfortable, conversations about restoring God's idea of justice. Join us as we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, turn this world upside down with extreme love.

Jesus reminds us "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

Our doors are always open to hearing how you've been impacted and how you would like to contribute to healing. The first step starts with how we love each other within this body of God's people. In the coming days we will present more opportunities to share, pray, and learn from each other and invite you to share ideas you have. The world needs to see God's people being God's people more than ever.
WE NEED EACH OTHER!