

June 2, 2020

A word from the presbyters of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta and Savannah Presbytery:

On May 27, 2020, the Council of Savannah Presbytery in collaboration with the Council of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, voted to put forth a statement calling for justice in the Ahmaud Arbery case. During the approval process of this statement by the councils of both presbyteries, more African Americans were killed at the hands of a racially prejudiced system. Our prayers and condolences go out to the families of Breonna Taylor (Louisville, KY) and George Floyd (Minneapolis, MN) as well as the family of Ahmaud Arbery (Brunswick, Ga). We are aware that even as we say these names that others will be added to the list in the days and months ahead. Justice for all of them goes far and beyond the arrest and conviction of all the perpetrators. Justice calls for a change to the fabric of American Society that condones and supports institutional racism in all its oppressive forms. No one is free until all are free. May God's wisdom and grace guide us as we address the sin of structural racism.

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We, the Council of Savannah Presbytery, in alliance with the Council of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, honor the life and grieve the death of Ahmaud Arbery, beloved child of God. Further, we hear God demanding faithful action in this teaching from Jesus: "Lord, when did we fail to help you when you were hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in jail? God will answer them, 'Whenever you failed to help any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you failed to do it to me'" (Matthew 25:44-45). God calls all persons of faith to notice how we indeed fail our neighbors, especially our brothers and sisters of color. The murder of Mr. Arbery in a neighborhood in Glynn County (Brunswick), Georgia, is a tragic case in point.

Re-committed to the struggle for racial justice, we highlight the anti-racism statement of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):*

- + We affirm that "Racism is the opposite of what God intends for humanity. It is the rejection of the other, which is contrary to the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ."
- + We affirm that "Racism is a lie about our fellow human beings, for it says that some are less than others."
- + We affirm that we "will stand against, speak against, and work against racism" whenever it is expressed in the world around us, in our homes, in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods, and in the church.

We invite all who believe in the redemptive power of God's justice, truth, and love to stand with the Councils of Savannah Presbytery and the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta in our pledge to:

- + Pray for all parties involved in Ahmaud Arbery's murder;
- + Walk alongside his family as they endure the journey of grief and the quest for justice;
- + Hold local and state officials accountable as they investigate this crime;
- + Watch for God's reign of love with hopeful eyes, grateful hearts, and unwearied hands.

Working together we can — we must — eradicate the sin of racism. Please join us.

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*<https://facing-racism.pcusa.org>