# CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN



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Regional New Church Director Commission on New Church richard@gadisciples.org September 24, 2020

Dear Members of the Christian Church in Georgia:

As members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia, we confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and proclaim Him Lord and Savior of the world. In His name and by His grace, we accept our mission of witness and service to all people. We maintain that God shows no partiality and confess that we are all created in God's image. We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.

By our faith and for our region, we denounce the recent and well-publicized widespread police atrocities taking place in our communities, state, and nation. This letter is not designed to point fingers of blame, but to declare clearly what this region supports, what it resists, and what we acknowledge as deep unresolved problems.

As Disciples of Christ, we must acknowledge that we live in historically established segregated communities; as such, we worship God in vibrant, but often culturally different ways. Furthermore, the historic segregation in which we participate has facilitated the discriminatory treatment of non-white members and neighbors.

We cannot merely blame the police for the continued violence against non-white neighbors. Nor are officers of the law the creators of other oppressive, systemic, social, financial, and political structures such as redlining, job discrimination, health disparities, voter suppression, and other abuses that we tolerate. Be that as it may, our primary focus is on police brutality and how to address its elimination.

To accomplish this goal, we must recognize the importance of advocating for justice, as stated in the open letter from Disciples clergy across the region regarding the death of Ahmaud Arbery. Ongoing events now make it clear that a permanent radical reformation of our criminal justice system is required. This reformation will require the intentional reconstruction of police departments nationally and regionally, with community interaction as a goal. We are calling for state legislators to enact legislation that requires independent civilian review boards to investigate all excessive force complaints. The use of excessive force must be subject to a new and impartial system of civilian review.

Furthermore, we celebrate with others the recent passage of Georgia's new "hate crime bill." This measure is a good first step in Georgia's march towards justice. We also realize the importance of cultivating opportunities to work together for equitable and harmonious communities in the neighborhoods where our churches are located.

The role of the church – as we love and live in Christ – must be to create places of listening and peaceful dialogue with others from whom we are different and to live as God's beloved community. The church must create and cultivate positive activities and authentic relationship-building between law enforcement agencies and communities to affirm public safety and strong neighborhoods.

As we pray and work with others for systemic change, we call on all Disciples to covenant to love each other as God loves. We hope that this letter invites us to travel together, striving to arrive at a place of love, peace, and authentic unity that would suit our Lord. There is much work to be done by all of us. Cited below are numerous resources for action, reflection, and study.

In Christ's Service,

The Regional Board Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia

### Some Suggested Resources to Use to Resist Racism\*

# Resources for White Ally-ship:

- Kesiena Boom, "100 Ways White People Can Make Life Less Frustrating For People of Color." https://www.vice.com/en\_us/article/ne95dm/how-to-be-a-white-ally-to-people-of-color
- Paul Kivel, "Guidelines for Being a Strong White Ally." Adapted from *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Social Justice.*<a href="https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/kivel3.pdf">https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/kivel3.pdf</a>
- Luke Pearson and Sophie Verass, "10 Things You Should Know About White Privilege." https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/10/13/10-things-you-should-know-about-white-privilege
- Reconciliation Ministry. "Prayers of Confession and Repentance for our Ecumenical End Racism Sunday." Reconciliation Ministry website, https://reconciliationministry.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/EndRacismSunday-AMELitany-PrayersofConfessionForgiveness.pdf (September 2015).
- Refinery29, Inc., "Black People Need Stronger White Allies Here's How You Can Be One." Refinery29 website, <a href="https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/05/9841649/allyship-ahmaud-arbery-george-floyd?utm\_source=email&utm\_medium=email\_share">https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/05/9841649/allyship-ahmaud-arbery-george-floyd?utm\_source=email&utm\_medium=email\_share</a>

## Disciples Leaders Responses:

- Rev. Kevin McNeil, "We Are Not Saved: A Call to Action." Homily. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YE9pPr-ne18">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YE9pPr-ne18</a>
- Rev. John Mobley. "An Open Letter to the Pastors of the Alabama Northwest Florida Region." https://www.facebook.com/john.p.mobley.3/posts/10156822352361792
- Rev. Teresa Hord Owens, "Acting in Solidarity Without Fear."

  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/terrihordowens/videos/245086473418034/UzpfSTYxM">https://www.facebook.com/terrihordowens/videos/245086473418034/UzpfSTYxM</a>

  <a href="mailto:TQxMTEyNTozMDYwNjExMjk0OTk0MTQ6MTA6MDoxNTkwOTk0Nzk50jI2MTA5OTQwNjA3NTU0\_MjA1NDE/">https://www.facebook.com/terrihordowens/videos/245086473418034/UzpfSTYxM</a>

  <a href="mailto:TQxMTEyNTozMDYwNjExMjk0OTk0MTQ6MTA6MDoxNTkwOTk0Nzk50jI2MTA5OTQwNjA3NTU0\_MjA1NDE/">https://www.facebook.com/terrihordowens/videos/245086473418034/UzpfSTYxM</a>

  <a href="mailto:TQxMTEyNTozMDYwNjExMjk0OTk0MTQ6MTA6MDoxNTkwOTk0Nzk50jI2MTA5OTQwNjA3NTU0\_MjA1NDE/">https://www.facebook.com/terrihordowens/videos/245086473418034/UzpfSTYxM</a>

  <a href="mailto:TQxMTEyNTozMDYwNjExMjk0OTk0MTQ6MTA6MDoxNTkwOTk0Nzk50jI2MTA5OTQwNjA3NTU0\_MjA1NDE/">https://www.facebook.com/terrihordowens/videos/245086473418034/UzpfSTYxM</a>

  <a href="mailto:TQxMTEyNTozMDYwNjExMjk0OTk0MTQ6MTA6MDoxNTkwOTk0Nzk50jI2MTA5OTQwNjA3NTU0\_MjA1NDE/">https://www.facebook.com/terrihordowens/videos/</a>

  <a href="mailto:TqxMTeyNtoxMDYwNjExMjk0OTk0MTQ6MTA6MDoxNTkwOTk0Nzk50jI2MTA5OTQwNjA3NTU0\_MjA1NDE/">https://www.facebook.com/terrihordowens/videos/<a href="mailto:TqxMTeyNtoxMDYwNjExMjk0OTk0MTQ6MTA6MDoxNTkwOTk0Nzk50jI2MTA5OTQwNjA3NTU0\_MjA1NDE/">https://www.facebook.com/terrihordowens/videos/<a href="mailto:TqxMTeyNtoxMDyk0Nzk50jI2MTA5OT">TqxMTeyNtoxMDyk0Nzk50jI2MTA5OT</a>

  <a href="mailto:TqxMTeyNtoxMDyk0Nzk50jI2MTeyNtoxMDyk0Nzk50jI2MTa5OT">TqxMTeyNtoxMDyk0Nzk50
- Rev. Dr. Darryl Trimiew, "The problem of Sin for Twenty-First Century Christians." In *Chalice Introduction to Disciples Theology*, edited by Peter G. Heltzel, (Chapter 18). St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2008.

#### Other Resources

Dr. James Cone, "The Cross and the Lynching Tree." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ht59Cup7Jg&t=3393s

Rev. Frank Thomas, "Cain & Abel." On Police killing of an innocent black person in Chicago – A call to action. (30 minutes long)

<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRekO21N4jo&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR3UE-7kB2K7r9aC3u1loeGnhzcO8ENl4NDSxKe6VMa9-t\_7BlaeHvKypeA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRekO21N4jo&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR3UE-7kB2K7r9aC3u1loeGnhzcO8ENl4NDSxKe6VMa9-t\_7BlaeHvKypeA</a>

<sup>\*</sup> Many of the above-mentioned resources are from the office of Disciples Reconciliation.