

PC(USA) leaders call for calm and prayer in Ferguson crisis

August 19, 2014

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic. 6:8, NRSV)

In this time of angst and anger, frustration and fear over the shooting death of eighteen-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) calls for calm and prayer as justice is sought and righteousness pursued.

We, along with the rest of the world, mourn the loss of this child of God, and are pained that his future was brought to an abrupt halt.

We, along with the rest of the world, seek answers to why an unarmed human being was shot repeatedly, and question the way in which local law enforcement handled the aftermath.

We, along with the rest of the world, are stunned by the violence that has erupted in Ferguson, and acknowledge that the turmoil is rooted both in Michael Brown's death and in years of disenfranchisement and hopelessness for many in that community.

We, along with the rest of the world, cry out in sadness over the troubled state of race relations in the United States, a situation born out of centuries of unreconciled issues that too often have been translated into distrust, fear, anger, and violence.

Therefore, as people of Christ committed to justice and love, we call for calm in Ferguson as work is done by state and federal officials to seek answers and bring justice. We appeal for an end to the violence, the looting, and the aggressive force, and urge all involved to suspend activities that perpetuate the negative cycle under way.

We also call on our nation as a whole to pray without ceasing for healing in Ferguson, and for real dialogue and action at local, state, and national levels to improve race relations in the U.S. The PC(USA) stands firm on its historic commitments to equality and human rights, and will continue as a denomination to press for fairness and justice for all of God's people.

O God, with heavy hearts we turn to you. Another life taken. Another future robbed. Another young person of color killed. One death that led to injury, violence, and unrest in the days that followed, exposing divisions and systems of injustice. Struggle and confrontation that continues today.

Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

Family, friends, loved ones, and neighbors of Michael Brown unable to mourn in peace

because their backyards are filled with tear gas, rubber bullets, violence, and military force. Children unable to attend school. A place where the shadows of night bring uncertainty instead of rest. A place that could be our place, too.

Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

A time where hands in the air not only mean surrender but solidarity. As differences seek to rule the day, we search for another path, a new way to live in community. Change our hearts and transform them from places that see “otherness” to ones that honor your image in each person. Guide us to use our voices to name the racism still thriving in our midst, striving for systems of accountability that maintain justice for all people. Strengthen us for the difficult, but beautiful, work of dismantling racism and building a community where all are welcomed and honored.

Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

There are no excuses. There are no reset buttons. There is just us, your faithful people, seeking ways to bring hope into a time in such desperate need of it. Stir our hearts, free our minds, guide us to follow your way. Help us to push aside our complacency to make room for your Spirit, calling us forward from this place. Make us instruments of your peace.

Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

The Reverend Gradye Parsons Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

Ruling Elder Heath K. Rada Moderator, 221st General Assembly (2014)

The Reverend Larissa Kwong Abazia Vice Moderator, 221st General Assembly (2014)

Ruling Elder Linda Bryant Valentine Executive Director, Presbyterian Mission Agency