



## **CRYING OUT, REACHING OUT**

**A Statement by The Rt. Rev. Gregory O. Brewer**

As I reeled from the shooting in Baton Rouge, then the shooting in St. Paul and now the shooting in Dallas, I knew I could not say nothing. Grief not expressed easily becomes indifference. Indifference is not what we need right now. What we need is prayer and action.

What to do?

### **1. Face the enemy within.**

The evil temptation is to make these tragedies about “other people” who are not connected to me. Many of us, however, treat people who are dissimilar to us differently. Just this week I heard stories from three different people: one a Native American and the others were African American. Each told stories about being treated differently just because of the color of their skin. One dad, whose young son had been publicly slighted because of his race, had the tragic responsibility to inform his son that this could be what the rest of his life would be like - just because he was a person of color. Why must this be? And, just in case you were wondering, these were not poor people who lived in the “wrong neighborhood.” They were people of both education and means.

Beg God to help us see other people as He sees them. Pray that we learn to love as God loves us.

### **2. Pray for those more intentionally connected to these tragedies.**

As one friend of mine posted on line:

Praying for the grieving families and loved ones in #Dallas, #BatonRouge, and #FalconHeights.

Praying for those in critical condition.

Praying for black lives to matter.

Praying for police to be safe and wise.

Praying for all of us to repent, reconcile, and heal.

Praying in Jesus' name.

### **3. Purposefully reach out.**

Ask yourself and your congregation the question: How do I intentionally contribute to racial unity? Bishop Rob Innes, Anglican Bishop of Europe, said, "Britain seems anxious to build fences. My job as a bishop is to build bridges." The same is true for us. Our job as Christians, living in a world marked by increasing hostility and fear, is to intentionally build bridges. Are you inviting people whose skin color is different from yours into your life? At home at your dining room table? Over coffee? In a Bible study?

What about your church? Do the members of your congregation racially look like your neighborhood? What about caring for your community? Can congregations who are racially different link arms in a public show of solidarity? The Biblical vision of the church is of a people made up of "every tribe, tongue, people, language and nation" (Rev. 5:9). Is your congregation color blind in its hiring of staff? My sense as your bishop is that most congregations are not. We may use euphemisms about finding someone who "fits our culture" but the bottom line is often about racial preferences. Why continue to prop up such sinful practices? Can our churches be places where people of different races are not treated differently? Can we raise a generation of young people who see all people, regardless of race, through the eyes of Christ?

It grieves my heart that in 2016 we still live both in a church and in a society where these sorts of recommendations need to be affirmed. One would hope we would have gotten past much of this by now and that the Christian church would be more of a visible expression of unity than our hostile and divided culture. But it does not have to be this way.

Now is not a time to merely wring our hands and wish this were not happening.

Now is the time to pray.

Now is the time to act.

With hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory O. Brewer". The signature is stylized and includes a cross symbol to the left of the name.

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