



PO Box 83
Watervliet NY 12189
T 518.273.4991
info@albanypresbytery.org
<http://albanypresbytery.org>

June 12, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

First and foremost, an apology is in order. The leadership of Albany Presbytery, in this case the Executive Committee and officers, have been silent these past few weeks. We have been silent on the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. We have not included them in our prayer list in the most recent E-news; we have not addressed the recent protests or ongoing struggle for racial justice on our website; we have not offered resources to our congregations for how to educate ourselves and work toward anti-racism; nor had we written a blog post about the courageous and righteous actions many of you have taken during this time. We are sorry for that silence.

Michael Burkley
Moderator

Judy Hartley
Vice-Moderator

Bill Henderson
Temporary Presbyter

Rebecca Lawson Putman
Stated Clerk

Beth Illingworth
Chaplain

Jennifer Schoenfisch
Office Administrator

We have also been silent, for a long time now, about the sin of White Supremacy and the destructive current of hate running through our nation, both in our history and our present. We apologize for that silence. For us to realize the effect of our silence, something that should never, ever have needed to happen did indeed have to happen; a minister-member of our presbytery, who is a person of color, contacted us to express hurt, frustration, and sadness at our silence. The communication came as a personal statement, but one that also alerts us to the way other members of color might also feel unseen, unheard, and unaided by our presbytery and our leadership. We immediately realized that we had made a grievous mistake, but that alone is not enough. We lament that it took the words of a colleague and friend to make us realize the destructive power of our silence in the face of injustice. We repent of our sin and our complacency, and ask forgiveness from our Creator and our siblings of color.

An apology alone is not enough. A statement alone is not enough. We do not say these things because we are trying to satisfy everyone in our presbytery. In fact, we know that our statement will be imperfect and potentially displeasing to many. But sometimes certain things need to be said because they are right, and it is the minimum of what we are called to do as followers of Jesus Christ. So, we say this: Black Lives Matter. The murder of Black and Brown people at the hands of the police is reprehensible. The murder of Black and Brown people at the hands of vigilantes or anyone else is inexcusable. We lament the lives that have been lost to racist violence. We lament the persons created in the image of God who we have taken from God's world by our actions and our inactions. We stand with our siblings of color, be they members of our presbytery, members of our congregations, our neighbors in our own communities, or those throughout our nation, as they stand up and demand the rights that should have always been theirs but have been denied them for hundreds of years. We repent of the sin of racism



PO Box 83
Watervliet NY 12189
T 518.273.4991
info@albanypresbytery.org
<http://albanypresbytery.org>

and White Supremacy. We ask forgiveness for what we have done, and what we have left undone. We stand ready to continue the work of anti-racism in ourselves, our churches, our communities, our presbytery, our nation, and the Church. We are ready to listen, research, read, and learn what we do not know about how to be a better support in the fight for racial justice. Once we learn, we can be better prepared to act.

Our colleague reminded us of the Great Ends of the Church from the Book of Order of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This section says, *“The great ends of the Church are: the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world (F-1.0304).”* In this time of pandemic and building closings, it is easy to focus on the closure and re-opening of church buildings as if that is the same as the maintenance of divine worship. Instead, we are reminded of the ways in which we are called to shelter and nurture the children of God in our midst, particularly those of color. We are called to stand up for what is true and righteous in the face of lies and hate. We are called to exhibit the Kingdom of Heaven to the world, and as the leadership of the presbytery, we are called to guide and resource our members and congregations in doing this. Our proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind calls us to stand against the threat of violence and death at the hands of people and systems shaped by White Supremacy and racism. All of these things are what it means to be Presbyterian and Christian. It is not extra. It is an intrinsic part of worshiping a Brown man unjustly condemned and executed at the hands of the state. It is a central part of worshiping a Creator who shaped us all equally in the image of God. It is an inherent part of worshiping the Breath of God when our siblings are crying out that they can’t breathe. This is our calling. May God forgive us for the ways we have failed this calling, and may God strengthen us to live up to it from now on.

The Executive Committee of Albany Presbytery,

Becca Lawson Putman, Stated Clerk
Bill Henderson, Temporary Presbyter
Michael Burkley, Moderator
Judy Hartley, Vice Moderator
Kate Kotfila, Former Moderator