

A Special Note from Bill Cleveland, Sojourners Group Leader

Hello Sojourners!

Our message this past week was delivered by retired District Superintendent, Rev. Nancye Dunlap. Her texts came from the creation account in Genesis, and the Great Commission in Matthew's gospel, which she built upon, addressing how we *create* our lives (our behavior), and how we *create* community (how we treat our neighbors). Our recent national persona has been rocked by the corona virus threat, followed by the cruel death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis policeman. It is important that we as followers of Jesus Christ respond to these situations in loving and measured ways, avoiding the knee-jerk hysteria that the culture seems to encourage. Bishop Beard calls for us to embrace conversations about racism and difficult issues, and create a calm environment where this can be accomplished. Hear what he says:

Lord Give Us Eyes To See

By Bishop Frank J. Beard

It is the job of every Christian to serve as conduits of grace, mercy, and love so that the dark forces of our world might experience the liberating light of Jesus Christ. It is our job to help stamp out hatred in any form. Therefore, I encourage all United Methodists to pray for the families that are affected by this most recent tragedy, as well as those suffering a similar plight in recent months. I remind us all that it is our duty, as sisters and brothers, to stand-up, speak-out, and advocate for those that are hurting and marginalized, so that justice may become a reality. . . .

Dealing with racism is not easy and it takes a lot of energy and forethought that will often move us into uncomfortable places. Speaking up and out is important, even though people often are scared to say anything because they worry that if they say the wrong thing, they might get in trouble or find themselves being labeled. It is crucial for Christians to create safe sanctuaries where we can have difficult conversations about racism and other topics that promote injustice.

Here are 10 ways that Christians can begin to "address systemic injustice and discrimination."



Bishop Frank J. Beard

1. Becoming aware of policies and practices that promote disparities based on race, ethnicity, stereotypes, or economic status.
2. By employing the use of empathetic listening that is engaging and helps with validating the feelings and personal experiences of persons of color, without being dismissive or making explanatory comments that seek to rationalize or soothe away their pain.
3. Learn to recognize and understand your own privilege and experiences that are based on skin color and power.
4. Share your own story as you engage in tough conversations about race and injustice. Your story will help foster deeper understanding for you and for others as you interact together.
5. Recognize that America is NOT a "melting pot" but rather a "garden salad" containing a blend of unique colors and flavors meant to be experienced together. DO NOT give in to the myth that you must be "color blind."
6. Seek to identify with those that are marginalized and who face the effects of a system that thrives and survives on racist behavior and practices.

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7. Use the power of your own personal finances by taking a stand with your money. Be aware of the practices of those you do business with.
8. Create safe places for difficult conversations, utilizing people experienced in providing diversity training.
9. Develop and foster relationships with people of color based on mutual respect and concern for each other's well-being.
10. As people of faith, pray for and with others, that Jesus' prayer for unity would become a reality. (John 17:20-23)

Source: Excerpted from *Goodnewsmag.org*, June 8, 2020.