



God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



Pastoral Letter

August 15, 2017

Last weekend, a group of white supremacists came to Charlottesville, Virginia, and incited violence to protest the removal of a Confederate monument. Although protest is the bedrock of our nation's democracy, coming in riot gear proves that they intended to do more than simply protest.

We, the Council of Conference Ministers and Officers of the United Church of Christ, strongly condemn the acts of violent hatred expressed by these white supremacists, Neo-Nazis, and Ku Klux Klan members. Their white robes and burning crosses were replaced with polo shirts, khakis, and tiki torches, while their lynching was replaced with a speeding car barreling through a group of peaceful protesters with the intention of harming and killing others, which it did. Their vitriolic hatred is the same.

We confess that the events of Charlottesville are systemic and communal expressions of white privilege and racism that continues to pervade our nation's spiritual ethos. And if we only condemn the acts of August 12, 2017, without condemning the roots of racism, which perpetuate discrimination in our American schools, justice system, business, and healthcare systems, then we have sinned as well. We must work toward the Kin-dom of Heaven here on earth now for the sake of a just world for all.

We do this by committing to follow the ways of Jesus, who stood with the oppressed, spoke out against political and religious powers, and courageously embodied a just world for all as he sought to create it. Today, we must follow the ways of Jesus in addressing the hatred of white supremacists and racists among us.

Our local UCC churches must be true solidarity partners with those who march in the streets. Our UCC churches are encouraged to move from the sanctuary and walk alongside other clergy and community leaders who seek to resist, agitate, inform, and comfort. We must resist hatred and violence. We must also agitate ourselves, and our neighbors to acknowledge any racism within or among us. We must inform ourselves, and our neighbors what our sacred stories reveal to us of a just world for all. We must lament and grieve with those who are injured or murdered during violent confrontations with those who mean us harm. And we must comfort those who have been discriminated against with the transformative love of God.

As we go forward, let us model the legacy of activism through our sacred call given to us by our UCC ancestors: May we be prophetic truth-tellers like our Congregational Christian forebears, who marched in public squares demanding equality for all. May we serve others, and remain faithful witnesses like our Evangelical and Reformed forebears, who tended to the needs of the forgotten. And may we be courageous like our non-UCC forebears, who left their spiritual home and joined the UCC in order to fully live out who God created them to be.

In the days to come, may God's truth, mission, and courage be our guide to embodying the Kin-dom of Heaven here on earth.