

# George Floyd Response

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May 27, 2020

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*Pandemic · adjective · occurring over a wide geographic area and affecting an exceptionally high proportion of the population*

*Synonyms · widespread · prevalent · pervasive · rife · rampant · epidemic · universal · global*

We're in a pandemic, but not the one you're thinking about. This is not the one that has recently taken the lives of almost 100,000 Americans and infected millions more worldwide, though that does continue to be a concern and is important. The pandemic we are talking about is a disease that has plagued humans since the Fall of humankind. Like most infectious diseases, this deleterious organism, once in the system, morphs and develops resistance to treatments over time. It is a disease we can be infected by, and be latent carriers of, without noticing its terminal effects. This disease manifests itself in many different forms and has claimed an incalculable number of lives.

Sometimes this pandemic shows up in colonial conquest and leads to mass genocide. Sometimes it rears its ugly head through sexism and the exploitation of women. It has the power to distort our vision, seducing us into believing that certain people are not equitably endowed with the imago Dei, and that others are disposable and inherently criminal. Despite a wealth of historic evidence highlighting the effects of this pandemic, too many Christians seem impervious to the ways sin fosters institutional injustice and economic inequalities that leaves so many people walled off from the shalom God intended us all to enjoy. How many atrocities have been committed in the name of religion, by people using the Lord's name in vain?

A particularly resilient strand of this virus is racism. For centuries racism has been institutionalized; codified into law, custom, and practice. Systemic sin is not new—Scripture highlights it and portrays how ethnocentrism corrupted the Egyptian, Persian, and Roman Empires. Lamentably, in our nation, the intolerable police misconduct that ended George Floyd's life is also not new. In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. declared, "We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality." What is new, however, is how social media captures and exposes the horror in living color for all to see. Nevertheless, on days like this, we must wonder, what has this new exposure actually changed in our world, and within the body of Christ?

Yesterday, many of us watched the video of George Floyd pleading for his life as an officer mercilessly knelt on his neck, using his body weight to constrict and then stop the breath in his body which ended his life. We had hoped Eric Garner would be the last black man we had to witness plead for his life in this manner, wailing, "I can't breathe" as an officer exerted deadly force. We prayed that Garner's tragic death would be a sort of injection to treat this virus...but lamentably it wasn't. Infectious diseases are resistant to treatment, and we must realize that the only cure for this pandemic is the gospel! We must reexamine our discipleship paradigms and recommit ourselves to racial righteousness. So again, less than two weeks after bemoaning Ahmaud Arbery's murder, we

petition yet again asking the Spirit of God to renew our minds. We join the psalmist in crying out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.”

As the Evangelical Covenant Church, we grieve the death of George Floyd. We lament that the pandemic of systemic racism has not only been allowed to grow in our nation but has also established a foothold in too many churches, fomented by some and ignored by others. The ECC will not ignore the sin of racism, a virus that has plagued our world far too long. We call on all Covenanters to “grieve with those who are grieving.” We grieve not only the death of George Floyd but a system that affords some the luxury of being treated with dignity when the law is broken, while others go to the morgue. In the middle of this brokenness, and our lament, we continue to stand firm in our faith, knowing that amid what feels like despair, we are not without hope because Jesus is Immanuel! Our Lord and Savior has inaugurated the kingdom—disarming the powers and authorities—and while the kingdom has not fully manifested, we persevere in faith, knowing that it will!

Please know that we are committed to support and resource congregations and individuals across the ECC as we join together to fight this pandemic. We are being tested on so many fronts right now, but this is a moment where the Church needs to stand strong, together.

In Christ,

John S. Wenrich, *President*

Paul Robinson, *Executive Minister, Love Mercy Do Justice*

Dominique Gilliard, *Director of Racial Righteousness and Reconciliation, Love Mercy Do Justice*

*Council of Superintendents*

*and The Mosaic Commission*