



# Dear Congregation,

Virtually every American has now witnessed the death of a Black man as he struggled to breathe while a white police officer clamped a knee on his neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds; the man, George Floyd, cried out that he couldn't breathe and called for his mother. It is an image we cannot dismiss from our mind's eye--nor should we try. Rather, we need to keep that frightful image foremost in our minds as we decide how we, as individuals, as a church, and as a society, will respond to the systemic racism of this country.

Many say this could be a "transformational moment" in America, in which we acknowledge the current and pervasive manifestations of America's deeply rooted racism and work together to eliminate them. To achieve such fundamental change, it is necessary to study history, build an appreciation of the extent and nature of systemic racism in this country, and engage in conversation about how we, as individuals, can assist in dismantling it. In doing all of that, we first need to learn how to talk about race: something we do not do well in this country.

It is with the above goals in mind that we have launched a Congregational Anti-Racism Learning and Action Initiative. As our Music Director, Kenneth Griffith said in a conversation with Rev. Vicki at the height of the protests, "I wish white people would understand that this work is not optional." We agree that it is not. It is not enough to be "not racist." We ask you to join us in making a commitment to learn how to be actively *anti-racist*.

Because we cannot wait, our initiative will begin this summer with multiple programs and a group read, *So You Want To Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo. This highly-acclaimed book gives us the language to engage in clear conversation about race and, shows white people the nuances of racism within ourselves, our family and society at large. A second recommended book is *How To Be An Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi.

We are living in a critical and, hopefully, transformational moment in history. We are being given the opportunity to act on our first two UU principles- honoring the "inherent worth and dignity of every person" and working toward "justice, equity and compassion in human relations". Learning and talking about systemic racism will better equip us to work with our social justice partners on the North Shore to meet the moral imperative of this moment. PLEASE JOIN WITH US.

Please mark your calendars now for the following programs:

- On June 28, our worship service will be dedicated to the moral imperative to become anti-racist. Coffee Hour that day will include a facilitated discussion break-out room to discuss some of the key ideas presented in the service.

- We urge white members of the community to attend ECCO's three-part online workshop "Dismantling Racism" on:

Thursday, June 25 7:00-8:30 PM

Tuesday, June 30 7:00-8:30 PM

Tuesday, July 7 7:00-8:30 PM

The church is happy to reimburse any member of the church for the \$35 registration fee. Register [here](#).

- Members of the SJMT will be scheduling conversations on a summer UUCGL group read, Ijeoma Oluo's *So You Want To Talk About Race*, in response to community input as to dates. Now is the time to get the book and start reading it.



**Church, can we commit to the spiritual practice of learning-toward-action together?**

**MAKE YOUR SUMMER 2020 ANTI-RACISM COMMITMENT HERE!**

In coming weeks, we will be updating our resources for anti-racism that you can find [here](#) on our website.

It is not enough that we have strong feelings. It is not enough that we care. We have to be equipped to respond to covert and overt racism when we see and hear it, armed with knowledge and spiritual conviction. And we must be better prepared to work toward justice in new ways, knowing the language and strategies of this generation's leaders.

This is what growing into harmony with the Divine looks like right now, and we can do it from where we are. Some will take to the streets. But collectively, we can have an enormous positive impact right from home. Let us be powerful together on the side of love.

In faith, toward action,  
**The Social Justice Ministry Team**  
**Rev. Dr. Victoria Weinstein**