



# The United Methodist Church

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Date: May 28, 2020  
To: Friends and Members of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference  
From: Bishop Sally Dyck  
Re: Yet Again...Death Comes to Black People

Endangered lives of black people: people out running, people watching birds, people driving to a new job, people out getting a snack, people playing at the playground, people walking, people driving, people doing normal things that people like me who are white don't have to worry about, much less fear losing our lives or being arrested. Sometimes someone may have committed a crime (white people do, too) but our justice system isn't meant to allow for someone to be killed in the process of being apprehended while on the ground.

As a white person I can't imagine always wondering if the police or someone else will kill me just because I'm being and doing normal things while white. I run in the dark most of the year and I admit to looking over my shoulder sometimes but I don't worry about the police killing me!

It keeps happening over and over again. People are exhausted...even some of us white people and other people of color. Exhausted from praying and hoping for change. And it keeps happening over and over again. I can cite all the scriptures and champions of justice like Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and countless others. But really? Black. Lives. Are. Sacred.

The most recent killing is of a black man, Mr. George Floyd, by the police is in Minneapolis, MN. Minneapolis has had a number of shootings of black people in the last few years.

African-Americans account for about 20 percent of the city's population, but they are more likely to be pulled over, arrested and have force used against them than white residents, Police Department data shows. And black people accounted for more than 60 percent of the victims in Minneapolis police shootings from late 2009 through May 2019, data shows. ([Please see this link](#))

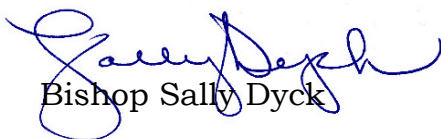


While all of our communities need for us to work for racial justice, in a little over a year thousands of United Methodists from around the world will descend upon Minneapolis. Will our fellow United Methodists who are black be safe? In its hotels, restaurants, (and yes) bars, walking down the street, maybe taking an excursion to the Mall of America, walking around the lakes to clear the mind and heart, will they be safe?

How will we insist that the city make it safe for all people? It's not just up to the United Methodists of Minnesota to ensure safety for our black American and African delegates. How will we worship in such a way that we lift up, confess and seek to bring justice not just to those who have lost their lives in Minneapolis but throughout the U.S.? Or will we just forget or bemoan many more between now and then? What will we do? I don't have answers to all these questions but I will question our preparations as we go toward Minneapolis.

On Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Church will celebrate Pentecost. Pentecost is a day of celebrating the many cultures and languages of people "in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and throughout the world" with the message of Christ. But this year, I can't help but think about the Spirit as "ruach" or "breath."

May God's Holy Spirit/Holy Breath breathe upon us to be a force of racial justice in the church and in our communities because there are too many people who cannot breathe! Breathe on us, Breath of God,

  
Bishop Sally Dyck

SJD:mla