



The United Methodist Church

CHICAGO AREA EPISCOPAL OFFICE

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Date: September 2018
To: Northern Illinois Annual Conference
From: Bishop Sally Dyck
Re: Prayer for the city of Chicago!

I am asking all United Methodist churches in Northern Illinois to pray for the city of Chicago!

In October 2014, Laquan McDonald, a 17-year-old African American, was shot 16 times by Officer Jason Van Dyke as the officer arrived on the scene. Police dash cam video caught the shooting, showing McDonald with a knife in hand walking away from Officer Van Dyke. The video was withheld from the public for about a year during the election campaign for Mayor Rahm Emanuel. Upon seeing the video, discrepancies arose about the police reports, resulting in charges being brought against Officer Van Dyke. Now almost four years later, the trial has begun. The city is on edge as it awaits the outcome of this trial; a city that already reels from multiple gun shootings each week.

I urge prayers for the city of Chicago during and after the trial. This is a defining moment for Chicago. This is an effort to address what we're *for* as United Methodists, not what we're against. We're not against police officers; like all professions, including clergy, there are moments of accountability for those who abuse their office. We don't wish revenge on Officer Van Dyke; we pray for a fair and just trial and outcome.

While this is a trial about one individual who is being held accountable for his actions, it is also about accountability in all police shootings. Our concern is underscored by the 2016 U.S. Justice Department's 14-point report calling for the need for reform of the Chicago Police Department.

I call upon United Methodists to pray, to become aware of the particulars regarding this case and as you are able to take an active role in peaceful public actions to restore the shalom of God to the city. A good resource is the WBEZ podcast: *72 Shots* (<https://www.wbez.org/shows/16-shots/55c63c72-d518-4ad9-b5dc-dd0d841d79a7>). It gives the backstory and the day-by-day report of what is happening in the trial, examining all the parties involved in the courtroom. Also, the podcast makes Laquan a real human being, not just a name in the news, as his friends and family talk about him.



And as we pray, yard signs will be made available to churches (and members) to display. The signs will read:

**PRAYING FOR OUR CITY
#JUSTICE4LAQUAN**

Other displayed messages that read “we are praying for the city of Chicago and justice” are also encouraged. You can request a yard sign via an email to ChicagoUrbanStrategy@gmail.com. Include your church name, church address, contact phone number and contact person.

Every day during the trial there will be gatherings in front of the courthouse (2650 S. California, Chicago). On September 24 at 10 a.m. United Methodists will be leading a worship service of prayer, singing, scripture, and sign-acts. All United Methodists and friends are invited to join me and others as we share our message and practice our open table of communion.

For those in the suburbs of Chicago and beyond, I would also encourage you to hold the city of Chicago up in your prayers throughout this trial and the announcement of its verdict. As the scriptures say, the welfare of the city is everyone’s welfare or future well-being. This trial in Chicago will impact people far beyond the city limits. Furthermore, where one suffers, we all suffer. Let us pray together as one body.

For churches within Chicago, the trial is a significant moment for Chicago and will have national implications. As one of our clergy said, “We’re irrelevant in Chicago if we have nothing to say or do about this trial.”

Thank you for your prayers in advance.

Sally Dyck

SJD:mla