

Racial Justice Task Force

Our current times are filled with strife, challenge and injustice. The murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other people of color by law enforcement during 2020 caused a wave of response throughout our country. Floyd's murder in particular, awakened people with white skin privilege to a long-ignored history of state sanctioned brutality by law enforcement. COVID-19 highlighted additional disparities in healthcare, education, employment and the criminal justice systems.

As a result of the above, we saw activist responses across the nation, including the greater Kansas City area. Marches and rallies lifting up the voices of black, brown and indigenous people of color (BIPOC) continue. St. Andrew Christian Church joins with those directly affected to call for an end to blatant and subversive acts of racism in our country. We also commit as individuals and as a congregation to investigating and challenging the conscious and unconscious biases we hold that support systemic injustice. We commit to on-going internal investigation of our policies and procedures to make sure they are just and welcoming to all.

Saint Andrew Christian Church is part of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ denomination. Our denomination has long been on the forefront of civil rights, anti-racism and social justice movements. Saint Andrew was founded as an *open and affirming congregation* to the LGBTQIA+ community. The first two senior pastors of this church were female, asserting our belief that women can and should hold positions of leadership in the church, including senior clergy positions.

As a faith community who practices justice, we are committed to being responsive to these times with our heart, our prayers, our presence, and our actions. Our work for justice calls us to prioritize the lives and voices of the marginalized and underprivileged, and to make reparations for the privileges we hold at their expense. It calls us to be a congregation that speaks out against all forms of racism and systemic injustice, and work for economic equity and equal access to resources for all.

We believe God created us in all our diversity to live as equals. We are all children of God and should be treated fairly and lovingly.

We are dedicated to walking with brown, black and indigenous people of color to change systems embedded with racism and other forms of injustice. We are dedicated to investigating and acknowledging our own unconscious biases that support white, male, cisgender privilege.

The Gospel story is grounded in love - love of God and neighbor. Love of neighbor has no bounds and is intended for every human on this planet. Each person in this world is a gift and is meant to thrive and flourish. Jesus modeled what it means to love all people. We believe we are called to respond to the racial injustice in our country, and we commit to being guided by the unconditional love of Jesus who was willing to confront the systems that prevented people from having equal access to resources needed to survive and thrive in the world.

We recognize people have different needs as we work together to confront racial injustice. We need spaces to lament. We need spaces to listen. We need spaces to educate. We need spaces to pray. We need spaces to act. Saint Andrew will be creating spaces for us to deal with matters of race in ways that reflect the progressive theology and practice that is a hallmark of this church. We have a small group from the church aiding us in identifying opportunities to respond and the ways to do so. The hoped-for result is a significant and lasting change in how we care for and treat one another in God's eyes.

To date, we are responding to individual and systemic racism in our community through the following:

- Participating in marches and rallies that support racial justice
- Engaging in small group and congregation-wide study on racism, white privilege, and systemic racism
- Going through a process for staff and leadership to be trained in anti-racism and pro reconciliation training
- Providing consistent ways for congregants to engage in daily anti-racist education and action
- Creating partnerships with organizations within our local and wider community about the work of racial justice and change: Urban League of Kansas City, MORE², SURG KC, and the Poor People's Campaign.
- Providing food and medical supplies to protestors in our local community