

Clergy Statement  
Honeoye Falls, NY  
June 11, 2020

We, the clergy of Honeoye Falls, NY, gather in the sacred memory of George Floyd, Ahmad Avery, Breonna Taylor, Trayvon Martin and Philano Castile and all people of color who have been brutalized, imprisoned, and murdered because of their race.

We do not gather simply to remember and to honor. Today, we renew our commitment to advocate for, defend, and protect those of us with black or brown bodies. We are here to stand up and say enough is enough.

We are here to proclaim our commitment to the fight against racism and white privilege.

We gather in midst of our community to proclaim the two great commandments of Jesus, the commandments that the great leaders of our country have sought to follow, and which form the highest calling of our faith: to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. We gather in deep sorrow, God's and our own, that the leader of our nation desecrated these commandments by using

military violence to forge a path to get to a church and pose with a bible before the media. We gather to denounce our government's use of military violence against its own citizens. We gather to call for an end to the violence.

We the church will not stand back and continue to watch God's children be treated in such injustice. We the churches of Honeoye Falls, and our denominations around the world are here to remind us all that we are ALL God's children and we are ALL made in his image! We have been directed by the prophet Isaiah to "learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphans, plead for the widow." This is our time to seek justice! Justice in our laws, in our communities.

And we gather to call for all persons to raise their voices in a unified cry that says "NO MORE!" to hatred. "NO MORE" to violence. And NO MORE to any harm that comes to any person based on their race, their ethnicity, or their beliefs.

However, before we can call on others to reject the hatred, blame, denial and excuses for injustice, we must recognize our own part. We gather today as persons of faith to proclaim ourselves first and foremost repentant. We gather in deep sorrow, God's and our own, *that we, the ones who vowed to follow Jesus in every way, have also desecrated the two great commandments.*

**We confess the racism and white privilege** that is a part of our denominational heritage and our organizational system.

We recognize that we, the historic and mainline denominations of the United States are among those who have benefitted from the violence done to black and brown bodies at this nation's conception and the systemic racism upon which this country was founded: violence and racial injustices that have plagued us ever since. Today, we publicly confess our complicity in the sin of racism and the reign of white privilege. We call on our government to do the same.

We are here to declare a change in our community, we are going committed to changing the narrative. We are committed to educating those who are not familiar with systemic racism. We are committed to bring a better level of understanding what it is like to live as a black or brown person in this country. We are going to stand beside our brothers and sisters of color! We are going to recognize racism as a sin and repent from it.

And we the clergy of the Honeoye Falls United Methodist Church, St. John's Episcopal Church, and the Honeoye Falls First Presbyterian Church make the following declaration:

**We pledge to take personal responsibility** to challenge theologies and practices that promote or accommodate structural and systemic racism and replace them with systems of justice and equality. We call upon our baptismal vows to remind us to "renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, to reject the evil powers of the world and repent of our sin."

**We pledge to repent of our personal racism**, our failure to hear the cries of our brothers and sisters, our silence in the face of racial injustice, our valuing of law and order, possessions and power more than lives, and our complicity with police violence. We call for an overhaul of our justice system.

**We pledge to be accountable to our sisters and brothers of color**, engaging with them in a process of reconciliation for our churches in order to bring change to our denominations' systems and structures.

**We pledge to bring our prophetic voices to the public arena**, lead our congregations to confront our racism and call for the

accountability of all law enforcement officers who abuse their positions of power, authority and privilege. If while performing their duties they violate the law, they should be terminated. We further pledge to work to transform our criminal justice system, and create congregations that exemplifies equality for all.

**We pledge to further educate** ourselves, our leaders and members in order to dismantle those systems for the sake of all God's children.

Today, we re-commit our ministry and our lives to becoming the church and community that God calls us to be: unwavering in our humility, fully committed to human dignity and compassion, and open to all efforts in repairing the breach.

We will stand in solidarity with our black and brown brothers and sisters and we will be a part of the fight. We will pray, we will fight, we will educate, we will make a change. Racism in our community ends today!