

Statement from the Province IV Bishops of The Episcopal Church

We, the Bishops of The Episcopal Church in Province IV, lead dioceses most of which were historically part of the states of the old Confederacy. As bishops in this region, we are well aware of the historic persistence of racism toward our black sisters and brothers. While such racism is not confined to our southern geography, its history with “Jim Crow” under its various guises over the years reminds us of the profound work left undone by our continued failure to fully address the sins of racism and white supremacy in our country.

Recent events are a shocking reminder of what we have left undone. The white vigilante murder of Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Georgia; the unwarranted killing by police of Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky while she was sleeping in her own bed; and now the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota also at the hands of police, scream out to us of our work left undone. Sadly, these racist murders are by no means the only ones, and they were not committed simply by a few bad actors. What we are seeing is the work of a conscious and unconscious system designed to deny dignity and safety to some of God’s children.

The demonstrations across our country indicate that people have had enough. We believe all people of good will and love of neighbor should insist that this behavior by police and white vigilantes end now. Their actions tarnish the reputations of the many wonderful women and men who serve as police officers. We need national leadership who will work to make the changes necessary in our justice system, so such brutality becomes a thing of the past.

We call on all in civil authority to step back from military-style responses to these demonstrations because they only serve to escalate tensions even further. What will reduce those tensions is a commitment by our elected leaders to lasting, tangible changes in law enforcement methods and in the laws governing them. We also invite our clergy and parishioners to recommit themselves to live into the Beloved Community, as Dr. King articulated it. We believe that this is what justice and mercy require as they are reflected in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Province IV Bishops signing (In alphabetical order)

John Bauerschmidt, Bishop, Diocese of Tennessee

Scott Benhase, Bishop & Vice-President, Province IV

Greg Brewer, Bishop, Diocese of Central Florida

Brian Cole, Bishop, Diocese of East Tennessee

Peter Eaton, Bishop, Diocese of Southeast Florida

Russell Kendrick, Bishop, Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

Frank Logue, Bishop, Diocese of Georgia

Jose McLoughlin, Bishop, Diocese of Western North Carolina

Henry Parsley, Visiting Bishop, Diocese of South Carolina

Phoebe Roaf, Bishop, Diocese of West Tennessee

Sam Rodman, Bishop, Diocese of North Carolina

Brian Seage, Bishop, Diocese of Mississippi

Rob Skirving, Bishop, Diocese of East Carolina
Kee Sloan, Bishop, Diocese of Alabama
Dabney Smith, Bishop, Diocese of Southwest Florida
Morris Thompson, Bishop, Diocese of Louisiana
Mark Van Koevering, Bishop, Diocese of Lexington
Andrew Waldo, Bishop, Diocese of Upper South Carolina
Terry White, Bishop, Diocese of Kentucky
Rob Wright, Bishop, Diocese of Atlanta