Seek, Love Walk’s Impact Statement

In preparation of the 2020 Lenten season, the Learning Committee of St. John’s Lutheran Church voted to read James Cone’s “The Cross and the Lynching Tree”. In this text, the author called us to refrain from the sanitization the cross and to instead look at it for what it was. This symbol, central to our faith, was capital punishment that an innocent man, Jesus was sentenced to for daring to challenge the status quo. Cone reminded us that coming to grips with the cross leaves us with no choice, but to see the parallels of such barbarism to the American terror of lynching that claimed and continues to claim the lives of Black Americans in these United States. Cone pushed us to realize that if we are horrified by what Jesus endured because of his love for humanity, then, out of love for one another, we ought to not only be appalled by the racial terror that Black Americans have and continue to endure, but our faith calls us to expose the evils our forefathers and mothers participated in or sat idly by an let happen, denounce it, and repent by letting our faith guide our actions that bring about reconciliation and right relationships. Cone’s words were a testament we all concurred with.

What we professed to was soon put to the test when at the onset of the pandemic lockdown, we witnessed the public lynching of George Floyd Ahmaud Arbery and learned of the lynching of Breonna Taylor. Every Friday, for 6 consecutive months, we took to corner of the street where our church stood to declare that Black lives mattered, we heeded the call of state advocates and with them, pushed for the passing of the Georgia Hate Crimes Bill, we organized dialogues that reiterated that race mattered and that in order to create a truly harmonious and beloved community, we must unpack the ways racism has been woven into American society.

Following the reactionary steps we took in response to the state of our nation, we sought a more methodical approach to our actions and read Michael Eric Dyson’s book, “Tears we Cannot Stop: A Sermon to white America” for guidance. While James Cone pointed to our hypocrisy in ignoring the gruesomeness of the cross so as to not be haunted by death and yet glorying lynching, Dyson used the liturgy of our most sacred time together, worship, to convey the ways racism is a lived experience by every Black person in the United States, the consequent physical, social, emotional and psychological effects it has on Black people and calls on White people, who acknowledge the reality of racism to lend their voices and bodies as a radical display of love and accompaniment for systemic change. Challenged by these readings, transformed by our collective witness and inspired by the ripple effects of solidarity we’ve created for our neighbors, we declare to:

Seek – Through historical, cultural stories ( both oral and written) of the past and present, to educate ourselves about racism, how it was constructed, how it has affected and continues to affect Black Americans and how, despite its attempt to crush their spirits they continue to survive and thrive.

Love- Build relationships with our Black Brothers and Sisters for it is through relationships that we learn to accept and see the divine beauty in difference.

Walk - to advocate on micro, meso and macro levels for systemic change so that equality is never a fleeting idea, but increasingly an ever-present lived reality for Black Americans.

We are Seek, Love, Walk: A Social Justice Collective. We invite you to us as we, with holiness of heart and life seek to do what the Lord requires of us, to seek justice, to love kindness and walk humbly with God.