

We Believe That We Have To Come Together Beyond Race

Michael Jenkins
July 2020



Thank you Dr. Walsh. I am grateful to be here. Good day to everyone throughout the world. UPF International has been holding peace talks on different topics, and Dr. Walsh and I spoke about the urgency of this matter. UPF-USA has been partnering with the American Clergy Leadership Conference; our pastors in Minneapolis and New York, Washington, Los Angeles and also congressional representatives -- Democrats and Republicans. We see hope. We see hope, moving forward.

First of all, we want to express our sadness over the tragic death of Mr. George Floyd, which was clearly an abuse of power, a terrible tragedy and murder by a police officer of the Minneapolis Police Department. We are saddened by the other officers who stood by. We are saddened by the terrible expression of pain and anguish and crying by citizens who were there, begging this officer to get off of Mr. Floyd. Now it has been upgraded to second degree murder and the other three officers have been charged.

But also what we saw was something that didn't happen in the past, that I recall, even when there was terrible trouble after Dr. King was assassinated or the riots in LA. This situation is quite different. People of every race, every culture, every religion, every background are pouring out onto the streets -- good people -- that want to put an end to this kind of discrimination and especially this tragic problem of people being hurt and of the abuse of power. Enough is enough!

The deeper issue is racism. It is not a simple topic. It is not something where we can easily say, Well, I don't have that problem. I do find that as I work with pastors and I work with other people from all different backgrounds, I, too, have to repent. I too have to become clear. I have not loved my brothers and sisters from all races. We all have these shortcomings. We tend to aggregate with our own people. That's typical of the history of mankind and it all starts from the beginning when God asked Adam and Eve to obey his will and the breakdown that occurred there.

Jesus came and gave us grace, but we also see there is still conflict within us; therefore, the religious leaders, we believe, play a central role. We know that many of the religious leaders in Minneapolis are working hard during the day. They're doing a lot of the clean up every day [from the protest marches] and at nighttime, there are some bad actors that come out.

Some are exploiting the situation

There is evidence as the Chicago mayor indicated, clearly, they are coming from outside of the community. The community does not want to burn down its own community. Bishop Noel Jones, when he was helping ACLC to develop a statement concerning this, a pastoral statement, said that it doesn't make sense that somebody gets into a fight outside of their house and to express their anger comes [into their house] and sets the couch on fire. Nobody would do that. This is not coming from the community. It's coming from people that have other intentions, but that has always been the case.

We believe that we have to come together beyond race. We have to deal with the problem of racism. It is not something we are going to be able to solve in the next couple of weeks or months. It's a process. We have to come to terms with what our shortcomings are. It begins with me dealing with it. One thing that

gives me a lot of hope and my conclusion is that when we saw [the US City of] Ferguson [Missouri] burn [in August 2014, a gas station, a convenience store and restaurant were burned down] that again came from a tragic death [of eighteen-year-old Michael Brown Jr., an African American man]. And when we also saw Baltimore burn [in 2015] they burned down a CVS pharmacy and an older gentleman in his seventies said, "Where am I going to get my medicine now?"



Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, soon after Dylan Roof, a white supremacist, murdered nine people. He began shooting when their eyes were closed in prayer during Bible study.

Tragedy at a Bible study

Dr. Rouse, the chairman of ACLC, and I went to Charleston, South Carolina, on the one-year anniversary after [the-then twenty-one-year-old white supremacist] Dylann Roof killed nine people in a Bible study, including the pastor. We had a tremendous experience because we heard from the people there -- as we gathered all the pastors for a memorial -- that Charleston was different because the black and white churches came together. They marched together (and there were people that came from outside, ready to riot, ready to burn, to destroy and the media was right behind them) but fortunately, black and white had come together first and got in the lead in the process. That is why Charleston didn't burn. Even one of the victims, Felicia Sanders, who survived that shooting, came out with the feeling that the only way she could overcome the incredible pain was not by hating her brothers and sisters from different races. She had to forgive that person and understand that it was totally evil -- the evil within.

So we have hope from that Charleston experience, and we see the clergy like Rev. Smith here and others working across this nation now diligently with Dr. Rouse and Bishop Noel Jones to get ahead of this curve. We will not get ahead of it right in this cycle, but we've got to permanently get ahead of it, so God's people need to come together, the godly congressmen -- Republicans and Democrats, godly people in education, academia. All the godly people need to come together. I believe there is tremendous hope with that. Thank you very much.

Dr. Thomas G. Walsh: Thank you Dr. Jenkins for underscoring the importance and value of our churches, our faith-based organizations at this time, which are desperately needed for their insight, wisdom and input and hopefully modeling how we can come together.