



Building just communities by breaking down the walls which separate us

“We Who Believe In Freedom . . .”

The outcome of the grand jury verdict to not indict police officer Darren Wilson in the killing of an unarmed 18 year-old African American male was met with sadness, anger and despair by many. Some of these emotions expressed themselves in unaccountable rage that resulted in property destruction and theft. Rage is justified. Violence and looting is not. The parents of Michael Brown urged protesters to engage in a non-violent response to the decision. Protestor across the country, obliged their request.

“We who believe in freedom, cannot rest. We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it come.” (*The refrain from Ella’s Song by Sweet Honey in the Rock.*) As a nation, we witnessed tangible unrest in response to the Ferguson grand jury decision and as a result in racial indifference toward justice. None of us are free if we in any way believe that lining up on one side or the other of the racial divide promotes peace. Silence, to the contrary, encourages division, suspicion and stereotyping. Until we are able to acknowledge and courageously address the perpetual presence of the silent rage that is buried skin-deep in black and brown citizens of this nation, we remain captive to the lie that “all men/women are created equal.” This unrest lies in wait for an opportunity to be unleashed in ways that are healthy, and far too often in unhealthy rioting, looting and stereotyping.

Forty-six years ago, our nation was in a state of civil unrest that followed as a response from the murder of another African American young man, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In response the violence and despair that followed the death of Dr. King, our Church launched the **Urban Emergency Fund - Reconciliation Mission**. Even in our courageous decision to address the root causes of racism and promote national healing, we were at times divided in our support of the mission. We however rallied in our commitment to covenantal relationship with one another and God, and successfully promoted a \$1 million mission fund that supported grants to anti-poverty initiatives and congregational efforts to eradicate poverty as a root cause of racism. As our mission has evolved, we again through covenantal relationship, though not always in agreement, recognize that systemic racism such as judicial, educational and economic systems have embedded practices and policies that promote unequal access to people of color.

We who believe in freedom – we the community of faith, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through our commitment to Reconciliation Ministry cannot rest until freedom comes. We encourage faithful dialogues in your congregations and communities to learn how you can be the bridge to freedom. We also encourage you to consider anti-racism training to further explore how to be an ally and the social-historical nature of how we have come to this place of unrest. Most importantly we encourage your faithful giving to Reconciliation Ministry so we can provide training and grants to your anti-racism programs.

So we turn not to the streets and social media to unleash our rage, but we lay it at the feet of Christ, our redeemer and our God. It is in Christ and only in Christ’s mercy that we take our lead to witness to one another in spite of our difference. In Christ and in covenant with one another as brothers and sisters that we rally to name our pain, ask the awkward questions and press toward the mark of our mutual liberation.

What happened on a remote intersection in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9th, 2014 was tragic for the community and our nation. The death of Michael Brown and the incidents that followed, have opened a door to a conversation for which can no longer remain silent. Christ is beckoning us to break the silence and act in accountable ways toward one another so we all can be set free. Let it be so.

Please consult www.reconciliationministry.org/resources for dialogue resources.

Ella’s Song: We Who Believe in Freedom: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LoPofPzkj4U>