



Our Mission:

To identify and strengthen leaders so that every congregation makes new and mature disciples for Jesus Christ.

August 14, 2017

Dear Friends,

I write to express my personal dismay over the Charlottesville, Virginia weekend demonstrations of extraordinarily horrifying hatred. The very idea of white nationalist supremacy sends shivers of fear down my spine. Have we not endured this repeatedly in the United States and world history and have we not (eventually) stood as (mostly) united against this kind of bigotry? Even fighting wars over it? This is sickening. I feel like I need to apologize to every person of color I encounter. I can't stand the idea that a person of color could look at me and wonder where I stand, because I am white. Because I am privileged. My grandfather died 50 years ago and when I helped go through his meager belongings, my cousins and I found his wallet containing a KKK membership card. That's when my oldest cousin revealed that as child she had come across a trunk in the garage and the trunk was filled with white hoods and a book of names. I loved my grandfather and am glad I did not know about any of this. It is part of my family heritage that I sure wish was not.

I believe what happened this weekend in Charlottesville is an invitation to all of us to stand against expressions of hate. Surely Charlottesville made Jesus weep. Surely it should make us all weep with Jesus. We as Christians know deep down that when one suffers, we all suffer. When one is blessed, we are all blessed. It's scriptural, right? I believe we are individually and ecclesiastically called to account for how we respond to demonstrations of hatred in our communities. Jesus' commandment to love our neighbors did not include caveats. When Jesus made the commandment, he was referring to the Leviticus 19:33-34 passage where God COMMANDS us to treat those who reside near us with love (not hate).

When we read The Confession of Belhar, we proclaim our "obligation to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another."

The Belhar even declares that we reject racism in every form of doctrine and ideology. I urge you to sit with the Confession of Belhar. It's long and repetitious and tedious. It needs to be. It hammers home a pretty clear message that is as sadly relevant today in our country as it was when it was written in South Africa. The Belhar declares a vow that racial hatred has no place in our society or our future. Read it prayerfully and invite the Holy Spirit to breathe on you the ability and willingness to internalize what we confess. Discern well what actions God would have you do. And then do them. The link below contains the confession and provides other resources that address Presbyterian responsibility in the matter of standing against racism in all forms. May the grace and peace of Jesus Christ, the hope of the world, be with you all. Amen.

Love, Patrice

<https://facing-racism.pcusa.org/>

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