

Bethesda - Chevy Chase Area Clergy Interfaith Statement of Unity
Following the Homicide of George Floyd

We are people of faith who believe justice is as central to humanity as breath. We believe breathing is essential to human life. Our common faith compels us to speak out when anyone cannot breathe and is denied justice.

We believe that all of humanity is created in the divine image and every person is of sacred worth. When we see people denied justice, we are angered. When we see the breath of life choked, we are outraged. We are committed to stand with every person who suffers, especially those who are victims of racism, bigotry and xenophobia, and all who cry out for justice.

The sacred text of Ecclesiastes (3:7) reminds us *there is a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak*. Now is a time to speak. George Floyd's death, like Breonna Taylor's and Ahmaud Arbery's and Trayvon Martin's and Emmett Till's and so many more, is part of our country's sinful past and present which must be addressed by people of faith. We are called in this moment to name the places where our history of the sin of slavery and racial injustice has perpetuated systemic harm to people of color. People of color are still too often treated as objects and not as beloved human beings, made in the image of God.

Though we may be physically distant we remain spiritually connected to one another. As leaders of diverse religious communities, we are compelled to witness to these painful injustices. Together, we call on our communities to join us in praying, lamenting, repenting, acting and standing up to help renew the soul of our nation by:

- ❖ Praying that cries for justice and change will be heard.
- ❖ Lamenting the times we have stayed on the sidelines.
- ❖ Repenting for the explicit and implicit ways we participate in structures of racism.
- ❖ Bearing active witness and proclaiming the peace and justice of God.
- ❖ Standing up for and with our siblings of color and declaring that their lives matter.

Unified and determined, we pray that cries of "I can't breathe" will be transformed into a breath of hope for all people.

Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer, Bethesda Jewish Congregation
Rev. Chuck Booker, Bethesda Presbyterian Church

Rev. Jenny Cannon, Bethesda United Methodist Church
Rev. Scott Bostic, Bethesda United Methodist Church
Rev. William Foley, Blessed Sacrament Church
Rev. David Gray, Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church
Rev. Chris Foster, Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church
Rev. Molly Blythe Teichert, Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church
Rev. Kirkland Reynolds, Chevy Chase United Methodist Church
Rabbi Greg Harris, Congregation Beth El
Rabbi Fabian Werbin, Congregation Beth El
Hazzan Asa Fradkin, Congregation Beth El
Rev. Jeff Jones, North Bethesda United Methodist Church
Rev. Sari Ateek, St. John's Norwood Episcopal Church
Rev. Anne Derse, St. John's Norwood Episcopal Church
Rev. Jessica Hitchcock, St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Rev. Shelby Etheridge Harasty, Saint Mark Presbyterian Church
Rev. Scott Wilson, Saint Mark Presbyterian Church
Rev. Roy Howard, National Capital Presbytery