

Charlottesville Reflections

August 18, 2017

As a community of Christians who are grieved by the violence in Charlottesville, VA, and what it represents, the Emmanuel Gospel Center humbly offers some reflections in service to the Church and communities of Boston—the city we love, where God has called us to minister.

We urge our brothers and sisters in Christ to denounce the evil of White supremacy (in all its forms) and affirm that all people are created in the image of God. Indeed, it is our hope that all Bostonians regardless of faith will affirm the dignity and value of every person.

Our Lament

We lament the violence and loss of life in Charlottesville, as well as the larger social situation that allowed such a tragedy to arise.

We lament the fear, personal trials, social conditioning, and isolation that leads some to participate in these public expressions of hatred.

We lament the ways these destructive behaviors hurt most Americans—of every background, as they can encourage more private and public expressions of bigotry, ethnocentrism, and tendency to hoard resources and opportunities out of fear for the well-being of oneself or one's group.

We lament our country's long and painful history of prioritizing the welfare of one group over another. We long for this legacy to be increasingly less evident so that we might each stand as equals, not just before God, but before police officers, mortgage brokers, and others in positions that can promote or stifle justice for entire communities.

Our Prayers

We pray for each family—in Charlottesville and beyond—that has experienced the pain of racism, whether acutely through a white supremacy rally or in their daily barriers to opportunity. We ask God for healing, resilience, and courage to continue forward in hope, love, and action.

We pray for those who have been deluded by the lie of White supremacy, and especially those who would say they are followers of Jesus. We pray that Jesus would speak to them by his Spirit and through his Body, the Church. May they in Christ experience freedom from lies they believe

about themselves and others, the country, and the world. May they by the Holy Spirit see the choices they can yet make to love others as they love themselves.

We have all these same prayers for ourselves. We ask for God's guidance in the choices we will all make in the future to make another Charlottesville less likely.

Our Calling

Indeed what remains now, what has always remained—even if Charlottesville had never occurred—is our daily calling as Christians, individually and corporately, to relate across lines. We have the privilege and calling to offer a redemptive response to pain, fear, violence, and injustice.

The Church has incomparable resources—in God's Word, the richness of our faith traditions, and the fullness of God's Spirit—to bear His love and healing presence. If any community has the shared resources to respond to fear with hope, to injustice with change, to hatred with love, it's the Body of Christ.

Let's commit to go beyond our isolated silos of self-protection or short-sighted action. Let's seek God's wisdom together, and contribute to Christ's restorative work, all by his grace, in step with his Spirit, and in his name.