

THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS



Published by **The First Baptist Church of Los Angeles**
760 South Westmoreland Avenue • Los Angeles, CA 90005 • (213) 384-2151 • fbcla@fbcofla.org

Volume LXXXIV

No. 15

JULY 18, 2016

An American Baptist Congregation Making God's Love Known in Los Angeles Since 1874

International • Intercultural • Ecumenical

A MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM PASTOR

Dear Church Family and Friends:

We closed a week of violence last week that witnessed the tragic deaths of two black men — Alton B. Sterling and Philando Castile — at the hands of the police with a terrible attack in Dallas against police officers, whose names we're just beginning to learn. It feels as though it has been death leading to more death, nothing anyone would ever hope for.

On July 7, a nonviolent protest was hijacked by violence and so, too, was the debate about the legitimate grievances that African-Americans face. The acts of the gunman in Dallas must be condemned. However, he has nothing to do with the difficult truths we must address if we are to make any significant progress on race relations in our country.

The Barnabas Partners, a cohort of American Baptist Clergy convened under the auspices of American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS) several years ago by Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins, III and Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr. (of which I am a partner member) in partnership with Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director, ABHMS, have endorsed the statement below in light of the recent killings of innocent civilians by police. We also condemn the tragic vigilante shooting in Dallas on July 7 with the same conviction with which we condemn the killings of innocent Black lives. The violence in Dallas is lamentable and is a tragic diversion from the righteous struggle for justice and peace on behalf of the victims of violence across our nation. The Barnabas Partners, a group of encouraging pastors who advocate for justice and community engagement will continue to pray and work with Dr. Haggray and ABHMS toward justice for all.

End Police Killings of Innocent Black Lives – Barnabas Partners (ABHMS)

O that my head were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I might weep day and night for the slain of my poor people! Jeremiah 9:1

We face a national crisis in the United States of America as concerns increasing violence and the growing threat to innocent Black lives from America's police. Daily in America, Black citizens are slain by police officers who are publicly sworn to protect the citizenry.

This national crisis is well documented from Baton Rouge, LA, to Falcon Heights, MN; from Waller County, TX, to Ferguson, MO; from Chicago, IL, to Savannah, GA; from Cleveland, OH, to Staten Island, NY; from the mountains to the prairies, to the oceans white with foam. However, time and again when police brutalize and murder Black people, they escape criminal prosecution.

Urgently needed is a remedy that protects Black people from persistent police brutality and murder. Also needed are sweeping policy changes advocated by the White House and by the United States Justice Department requiring prosecution of police officers in keeping with the standard protocols for investigating and prosecuting civilians when homicides are committed. Ultimately, we need respect for the dignity of all human life with a firm resolve as a nation to live together in peace as a beloved community.

To be clear, violent confrontations with law enforcement and vigilante killings are not a remedy, but a dangerous diversion from our righteous struggle for justice and peace. We reject and condemn assaults on police officers with the same conviction with which we condemn the killings of innocent civilians. As we grieve the loss of innocent civilians we also grieve the loss of police officers and pray for their families and loved ones.

America's current practice following the slayings of Blacks by police is a blend of cultural pathology on the part of prosecutors combined with racist urban mythology that quickly evolves into sympathy for the police officers without regard for the unjust killings of Black lives. Such gives dangerous credence to the notion that police are daily under fire from Black Americans— which, despite recent events in Dallas is historically untrue--and that the police are therefore justified in using deadly force against Black lives in order to protect their own lives, even when the use of deadly force was not justified.

Next, as we express honor, respect and appreciation for police officers knowing that most are decent people, the time has come for law enforcement officers to publicly affirm that "Black lives matter" in view of the glaring incidents of excessive force and brutality against

(Continued on Page 2)

PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

Zuleima Argumedo
Daniel Choi
Gerald Gubatan, Chair
David McFadden
Shirley Parsley
Alma Pineda
Richard Rogers
Marta Torres

NEWS SCHEDULE

The **next issue** of the *First Baptist NEWS* will be published **August 1, 2016**. Material and articles for the August 1st issue should arrive in the church office two weeks before publication, or **no later than 9:00 a.m. July 18**.

THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

(USPS 194-440)

Annual Subscription Rate:
\$10.00 per year

Published biweekly by First Baptist Church, 760 South Westmoreland Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90005. PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID AT LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to First Baptist Church *NEWS*, 760 South Westmoreland Avenue, Los Angeles, California, 90005.

All copy for the *NEWS* should be typed or written plainly and reach the Church Office no later than **9:00 a.m. MONDAY, two weeks prior** to publication.

STAFF: Norman Bullock, *Interim Pastor*; Esther Sanchez, *Administration and Building Coordinator*. James Johnson, Josue Guevara, Odos Nabors, *Custodians*. Kyle Irwin, *Organist/Choirmaster*. Sandra Rogers, *Communications Coordinator*, Lisa Thomas, *Interim Building Facilitator*.

CHURCH PHONE: (213) 384-2151

FAX : (213) 382-9669

VISTA TOWER: (213) 386-2786

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

www.FBCofLA.org

email addresses:

General: fbcla@FBCofLA.org

Norman Bullock: NBullock@FBCofLA.org

James Johnson: JJohnson@FBCofLA.org

Sandra Rogers: SandraBR@FBCofLA.org

Esther Sanchez: ESanchez@FBCofLA.org

Lisa Thomas: LThomas@FBCofLA.org

A MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM PASTOR (*continued*)

innocent Black citizens. In the midst of hostility there is a real need to regain public trust and cultivate mutual respect.

The perception in America is that Black lives do not matter to the police whether they are men or women, boys or girls. Recent police conduct has proven that **Black people from all walks of life, representing diverse cultural and religious identities, and varied socio-economic backgrounds are at risk of being unfairly profiled, detained, assaulted, arrested and murdered by America's police every day of the week for simply sitting in the privacy of their own homes, playing in the park, visiting a swimming pool, walking down the sidewalk, standing in a hotel lobby, selling cigarettes or CDs on the street, riding a bicycle, or driving a car.**

The killings of Black Americans by the police are so frequent that we can predict the public pageantry in the aftermath of a police shooting:

- ✓ Then follows elaborate calls for grand jury proceedings to decide whether there is enough evidence to charge the police for a crime. (This is always a bad deal for the cause of justice--since those meetings are secret, the murderer gets to speak to the Grand jurors in his own defense without being cross-examined, and all "evidence" is sealed.)
 - ✓ In the ensuing weeks and months the character of the deceased person will be smeared in the media as their past history (which has no relevance to their momentary encounter with the police) is made to loom larger than the violent conduct of the police in question.
 - ✓ Interviews of eyewitnesses and community members will degenerate into intimidating interrogations with damaging allegations made against their character.
 - ✓ Videotapes and other evidence will be lost or compromised by investigators, and key witnesses or family members will not be questioned by the police.
 - ✓ A typical murder investigation involving citizens where the weapon, perpetrator, multiple videos and eyewitnesses are all contained is usually wrapped up within a matter of days. However, when the police murder an innocent civilian, months transpire before a decision is announced concerning whether or not charges will be filed.
- Typically, no charges are brought against the police at the end of an investigation. Or if charges are filed, the case against them is fumbled in such a glaring way by prosecutors, or evidence against the police is deemed inadmissible by the Court, or instructions to the jury are
- ✓ Planned statements will be made to the press by police officials primarily for the purpose of keeping the peace.
 - ✓ Police will try to assure the public that despite what they may be seeing--if there is a video showing the murder--or despite what they may be hearing--if there are eyewitnesses speaking to the media describing the murder of an innocent Black person by police--"Things are not always what they seem, and there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes that normal people can't see when the police kill Black people. Just keep calm and trust the police to get to the bottom of this over the next several months."
 - ✓ State's attorneys will equivocate concerning their intentions under pressure from their friends in police unions while publicly expressing no regard for Black life.

A MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM PASTOR (continued)

narrowly prescribed in such a way as to guarantee an acquittal. In the end, the repeated failure of America's justice system to convict police who murder innocent Black lives begins to feel like state-sanctioned murder. All that notwithstanding, every day ordinary civilians are convicted of murder in much less time on far less evidence in America's courts.

Something has to change in America.

First, America needs to reckon with its historic race problem whereby Black life is devalued. Despite moral movements in America which purport to defend the sanctity of life, those voices fall eerily silent when innocent Black lives are murdered by the police. Despite the gun lobby's movement for the right to bear arms in America, those voices fall eerily silent when innocent Black people who bear arms without threatening the police are murdered, while the police allege that they were justified in killing the person simply because they believed he was armed with a gun or other weapon. When Black life is not valued it follows that Blacks are not seen as having any rights that the police are bound to protect.

Second, America needs to confront the spread of racism in the ranks of its police forces. The majority of the violence targeted at America's Black citizens is not a function of responsible policing, but rather it emanates from racist attitudes and racial profiling on the part of individual police officers, and race-based policies of police departments.

Third, leadership is urgently needed from the White House and Justice Department to name the evils of racial bias, police brutality and violence against Black Americans as unacceptable and unlawful. The United States government is not slow to name and condemn other nations when innocent civilians are killed by agents of those governments. In most places throughout the world, police are understood to be government agents. Therefore, it

follows that people throughout the world perceive the murders of Black people in America as state-sanctioned killings. Thus, it is urgent, both for the well-being of Black Americans and for America's image throughout the world that our national leadership enact sweeping policy and legislative changes protecting the rights of Americans from police brutality and excessive force and assaults.

Legislative action is needed on the part of the U.S. Congress, State Houses, Governors and Mayors protecting their citizens against police brutality and excessive force and requiring immediate and full prosecution of a police officer when it is suspected that the use of lethal force was not justified, thereby relieving prosecutors of political considerations related to indicting police officers who are suspected of murdering innocent civilians.

As faith leaders we reject violence and advocate for respect and security for all human life. We speak in the name of the loving God who created all people in God's image, and loves us all equally and unconditionally. God does not tolerate injustice, or look the other way when human beings are violated. We pray for grace and healing for all those who are victims of injustice and violence. We pray for righteousness and justice on behalf of all those who have been treated wrongly. We seek reconciliation and recompense on behalf of all those who deserve and want better. We dedicate ourselves to working tirelessly in our communities and our nation on behalf of change and progress, while speaking truth to power, correcting injustices, and improving the quality of life for all people. Amen.

(Barnabas Partners)

Dr. Jeffrey Haggray,
Executive Director, American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins, III,
Executive Director Emeritus

Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr.
Rev. J. Alfred Smith, Jr.

- Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Thompson
- Rev. Robert A. Wilkins
- Rev. Dr. Norman Bullock
- Rev. Dr. Anthony Lloyd
- Rev. Patrick Young
- Rev. Dr. John Giles
- Rev. Shane Scott

Let's continue to pray and work for the justice of all mankind!

With Hope,



Norman Bullock



Annual Church Picnic on Sunday, August 21, 2016 following the Sunday Worship Service from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Griffith Park – Crystal Springs. There will be food, fun and fellowship. More info to come.

Community Block Party and Open House on Saturday, August 27 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. There will be fun, food, and festivities for the entire family. Don't miss out on all the fun!



USHERS AND GREETERS NEEDED!

Are you looking for a way to get involved at First Baptist? We are seeking a few willing people to join our team of ushers and greeters. As an usher you'll welcome members and visitors to worship, and collect the offering. Please contact the Esther in the church office if you are interested!



SUNDAY, JULY 24, 2016

*Sermon Series in the book of Joshua about
the People of God in preparation and transition.*

9:30 a.m.

Church School Classes for All Ages

11:00 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary

“CROSSING JORDAN”

(Please read Joshua 3:1-17 in preparation)

DR. NORMAN BULLOCK, Preaching



SUNDAY, JULY 31, 2016

9:30 a.m.

Church School Classes for All Ages

11:00 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary

DR. JOHN Y. LEE, Guest Preacher