



June 12, 2020

Dear Colleagues in Ministry:

Greetings from Louisville.

I have struggled with writing this letter to our partners which is included below, in part because things change every day. As everyday unfolds, my heart breaks more. Our world is not a safe place, our country is not a safe place and our church is not a safe place for our Siblings of Color, especially our Black Siblings.

The past few weeks have been a wake-up call; for the world, for our nation, for our church and for World Mission. It's a wake-up call that has been sounding for hundreds of years but many of us have chosen to disregard it because our privilege gives us permission to do so. It's not been convenient, and we think it doesn't affect us personally.

I have been reflecting on what our church has said about racism. Our most recent policy, ***Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community Church Anti-Racism Policy*** states:

*Racism is the opposite of what God intends for humanity. It is the rejection of the other, which is entirely contrary to the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. It is a form of idolatry that elevates human-made hierarchies of value over divinely-given free grace. Through colonization and slavery, the United States of America helped to create and embrace a system of valuing and devaluing people based on skin color and ethnic identity. The name for this system is white supremacy. This system deliberately subjugated groups of people for the purpose of material, political, and social advantage. Racism is the continuing legacy of white supremacy. Racism is a lie about our fellow human beings, for it says that some are less than others. It is also a lie about God, for it falsely claims that God favors parts of creation over the entirety of creation.*

There is a great deal of work to do for those of us who are racialized as White. We have ignored the systems and structures that our ancestors built on the backs of People of Color – because these systems have benefitted us.

As World Mission moves forward, we must examine every aspect of our structure, our policies and procedures with the intention to dismantle institutionalized racism. It will be hard work. I invite my white siblings to join me in bearing the burden of this task. As White people, we have our own work to do to understand how we perpetuate and benefit from unjust systems and we need to hold one another accountable. We cannot continue to lean on our siblings of color, expecting them to help us “get it.” Our goal is to be one community. However, unless we work on ourselves first,

conversations around race forces People of Color to carry a heavy burden that white people cannot recognize.

To World Mission Siblings of Color – I recognize that the structure of World Mission, the way we do our work, how we engage together has put the burden on you to adapt to a culture that makes whiteness normative and has created unsafe spaces that have caused harm. I am in no position to define what a safe space might look like – but am committed to honoring your guidance and determination in shaping space that is life-giving and healing for all.

It is in this heartbreaking time, with so much loss and disruption, that we can no longer ignore God's calling and claim on our lives – a calling to become a Matthew 25 church that is rooted in equity and justice, where all have access to God's abundance and will dwell in safety and security. It is our opportunity as World Mission to struggle together to discern our role in shaping a different future.

Faithfully in Christ,

Sara