



June 12, 2020

Dear Partners in Christ:

Warm greetings from Louisville.

These are challenging times we live in. The COVID-19 pandemic has upended our lives across the world on so many fronts. Many, for whom life is already precarious, have found themselves tipped over the edge, wondering how to survive from day to day. Across the world, nations are suffering from overstretched medical services, people losing their jobs and livelihoods, devastating already precarious economies. COVID-19 has revealed a much deeper, pervasive illness that affects the entire global community but is profoundly visible at this moment in the United States. Institutionalized, systemic racism and white supremacy have been exposed in profound ways in recent weeks. Sadly, the recent violent deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, George Floyd and David McAtee are a common experience in the United States. These extrajudicial killings brazenly demonstrate what People of Color, especially our Black Siblings have known for over 400 years; the United States and its institutions, even the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have benefitted from the maintenance of institutionalized racism and white supremacy. Too often, we have perpetuated and reinforced racism.

World Mission cannot ignore its role in perpetuating this injustice. We need to engage in deep examination of the ways we have been and continue to be complicit in protecting the institutions of racism and white supremacy and confront vestiges of our colonial history in our current work in mission and ministry.

We need to repent of this complicity and commit to radical change in how we embody equity and justice in our relationships with you, our partners in God's mission. We are humbled by your grace over many years and ask your forbearance as we do the hard work that is set before us.

We remain deeply committed to our partnerships, even as many of our mission personnel have returned to the United States or have been asked to work from home in recent weeks. We are working with staff to adapt to the situation in their country of service – as lockdowns are lifted and communities re-open, we encourage mission personnel to work with you in determining safe ways to continue our work together. At the same time, please know that our Stated Clerk and chief ecclesiastical officer, Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson has determined that travel and in-person meetings, conferences and consultations will not resume until early 2021 if the spread of COVID-19 is under control or a vaccine is readily available.

These are difficult times for us all, and we need to stand together. We thank you for the ways in which many of you have reached out and supported us, particularly by lifting up the crises around race and racism, that we are facing in the USA at this time.

More than that, we need to work together for a better world, the world promised by Jesus when he said, *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly* (John 10:10). Working together we can make a difference.

Please be assured that we are still with you in your struggles, as we know that you are with us in ours.

Praying in hope and love, yearning for justice,

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