

Service of Prayer and Recommitment
Falcon Heights Church, United Church of Christ
July 8, 2017

Reflection

By the Rev. Jacob Kanake, Minister
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God is in the city. I believe this to be true with my whole heart. If God is not here, the community conversations held in the city since the death of Philando Castile would not have begun! If God is not in the city, these meetings would have been chaotic and uncontrollable. Although there were tensions and some slight shouts of anger, the community remained restrained and controlled through the conversations. God is in the midst of the city. There is hope in what we are doing because we are not alone, God is in the city.

People of this city are questioning an old held truth that the white tribe is superior and the black tribe is inferior. We are asking hard questions on what has been taught over 200 years in Europe and in America. We are at the verge of writing a new story, America's new history!

Are we succeeding in what we are doing?

Yes we are because God is in the midst of the city. There are old examples that can confirm our success: the white people migrated from different parts of Europe to America, they brought with them their language, culture, beliefs and practices. The segregated white tribes began conversations slowly and finally they merged schools, hospitals and have lost most of their tribal languages and united in speaking one language—English. That unity confirms my theory that the conversation we have begun will result in healing a long held stereotype of an inferior race. The African did not voluntarily come to AMERICA; they were forced; they came in chains. So over 200 years they were forced to lose their values, culture and beliefs; their personhood was systematically trashed, they had no home, they are foreigners in God's own land.

The death of Philando Castile in our city is informing us to move the conversation on amongst ourselves and among the people of good will.

Shall we succeed?

Yes, we will, we will if we realize every conversation needs patience and actively involved participants. If we can begin implementing our resolutions at an individual level, we can become the center of learning; other cities can come to learn what we are doing. One way of entrenching our resolve is to start a multicultural center where our collective historical resources can be stored, where we can gather, listen and celebrate our diversity. Where we can hold training and learn to ask hard questions on how we can dismantle the old racial systems. We can provide job and housing opportunities to everyone.

We will have distractors, people who sit on the fence and mimic what we are doing, and those who benefit from the division of the tribes. Those who still think the old world philosophy applies, those whose eyes cannot see the changes taking place around us, those who always think being at the table alone and throwing crumbs of food to those under the table makes them feel superior. These are the people that St. Paul reminds us to invite and involve in them in our conversation; if we do not, and allow their threats to stall our movement, they can take our city back. The cargo is in the carriage and train is on the rail line. Let us not allow ourselves to be stalled spiritually, emotionally, philosophically or intellectually. We should say no to those unwilling to reform the system. God is in the city.

Castile's death is a wakeup call; it is a call to act and reform the system and encourage all tribes to come together as God's people.

There is nowhere on earth where God said oppressing others, or benefitting from the other people's ignorance is blessed! If we want to keep God in our city, let us listen to what God is saying to us in this age. Our ancestors lived their time, they left us with this curse of hatred and division. It is now our turn to stop it and leave to the next generation graceful-love for each other. God is in the city, God will make our city glad when we act on God's call. God is amid the city providing streams of water—grace upon grace.

Amen

(continued)

Prayer for the Castile and Yanez families

This week we recall with a degree of varied emotions the death of Philando Castile in our city; a death that left a child without a father; the parents without a son; the siblings without a brother; a girlfriend without a boyfriend; a school without the dedicated and highly loved worker; a devoted worker who was loved by his staff, the children and the teachers. The death that left this community devastated and questioning how the police system works. We pray that you provide spiritual, emotional and psychological healing to the family of Philando Castile.

The day that Castile died may have also changed Jeronimo Yanez's life forever; it is a day that set the Yanez family into the spotlight of the world media; a day that left his parents, friends and relatives wondering what will happen to him and to them. It was a day of mixed feelings for them.

We pray for both families that you revive their souls and give them hope as they deal with the outcome of the case and its effects in their future. Give them courage to feel your presence in the midst of anger, confusion and fear.

The death of Castile moved the Falcon Heights city community to start asking questions and slowly a conversation on race was began. We, the city leaders and the community have made progress in our conversations, we anticipate to continue planning and acting on the resolutions. But, without you, God, we cannot do enough. We pray for your guidance as we continue to plan the future of a united city community. May this community of people with varied backgrounds unite in your name and work together for peace in the city and beyond. Provide this community and friends with wisdom, patience, and love to go beyond race, economic disparities, housing and employment bias. Bring us into the light of your presence because you are with us all. Hear these prayers because you are in the city, in our community, our creator and sustainer, God.

Amen

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