Racism in the time of Coronavirus

March 12, 2020

Beloved Community of Christ,

The Commission on Religion and Race is writing to you regarding racism in the time of the Coronavirus.

Friends, we understand that this virus is new and that our communities may be under-prepared or unprepared for contagion on such a large scale.

We know that many of those we minister to and with are disproportionately affected by this virus. This knowledge can be daunting, yet we can be encouraged by this passage from Philippians 4:6-7: “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Because of our faith in Jesus, we know that we need not fear. We should be cautious, but never afraid.

The diversity of our church, both geographically and ethnically, demonstrates that we are made up of many different members of the Body of Christ. We are also reminded that when one of us hurts, the whole of us suffers.

It is with this understanding and great sadness that I share with you that racism and xenophobia have been directed at our brothers and sisters of Asian descent due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

These types of attack are uncalled for and un-Christian. They come from a place of ignorance and hatefulness that should not even be entertained as believers of the Gospel of Christ. Though the hurt of racism and xenophobia is real and is pervasive in our annual conference, as members of this body we are called to do all we can to eliminate the harm it causes and the fear and self-hate it can generate.

Our Asian sisters and brothers need to be reassured of our support and love for them.

As we speak of what to do to keep our families safe and whole during this season, we also remind you that our family is greater than just those with whom we are born and raised. Our family is the Family of God. we encourage you all to tend to one another.

If you see something, say something. If you witness discrimination or hateful actions being directed toward a person of color, do not turn away. Be a means of safety for those subjected to abuse. If you fear for your safety or that of another person, call 911. Just as Jesus shared in the story of the Good Samaritan, the one who shows mercy is the one who is neighbor. We are all called to show mercy!

Friends, please remember the three simple rules of John Wesley: Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God.

During this season of Lent we are called to self-examination and spiritual growth. We are called to become “more” than what we were yesterday … We are called to live out the gift of grace through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Commission is calling on all of us to be an example of that loving grace that can change the world by living out our faith in mutual love and affection.
In His Service,

Rev. Effie McAvoy,
Chair, NEAC Commission on Religion and Race