



Bloomington

FAITH LEADERS

Dear Mayor Tim Busse, the Bloomington City Council, and Police Chief Jeff Potts,

As leaders of faith communities in Bloomington, we are entrusted to care for all people, including Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC). The killing of George Floyd on May 25th tragically echoed and amplified stories of BIPOC in our communities. Their stories reveal separate and unequal experiences of life in Bloomington.

We value truth and trust that “the truth shall set you free.” The act of truth-telling is holy. We applaud the BIPOC who shared their truth with us, at times in pastoral confidence. To end racial inequality, we must tell the truths we’ve been hearing and witnessing about racism and white supremacy in Bloomington. White lives, white experiences, and white voices have carried and continue to carry inequitable power in our city in ongoing and systemic ways.

We need the city of Bloomington to tell the truth and to hear the hard truths being told about racial inequity in our city.

Here are some difficult truths we have uncovered just in the span of a few days:

- Out of one individual's conversations with 13 separate Black individuals, 11 of them have had at least one, and in many cases many, negative experiences with Bloomington Police.
 - One young Black man described an instance of 5 Bloomington police officers pulling guns on him in his own backyard.
 - Another young Black man described his fear of filming Bloomington police, stating, “I’m afraid they would think my phone is a gun and shoot me.”
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- A Black grandmother talked about her teenage grandson being followed, stopped, and questioned by the police for being “suspicious” when he was riding his bike home from church.
- A Black woman reported to a pastor an instance of egregious behavior by Bloomington PD, but she was too scared to report it to the police out of fear of retaliation.
- Atonement Lutheran Church hosted a “Bloomington Unites” racial justice rally and proclaimed “Black Lives Matter” on their church sign only to find two days later a rock thrown through the church windows, an act of vandalism that had never happened to them before.

We commend the stated focus of Chief Jeff Potts and the Bloomington Police Department on making reforms to address racial inequalities and police misconduct, and support the step to implement mandatory annual psychological assessments; however, there is more to be done. To aid in our collective effort to know and tell the truth about racial inequity in our city, we request that it *immediately* become the policy of the Bloomington Police Department to track and publicize demographic data regarding policing activity in our city. This means documenting and making public and freely available the officer’s perceived race of individuals involved in an encounter, probable cause or basis for the encounter, actions taken (including searches) and outcome. Racial profiling is established by a pattern of encounters and this pattern cannot be discerned if data is not collected and analyzed for all encounters. We ambitiously dream of reforms that will bring about an end to police brutality and harassment, making Bloomington a safer city for all people to live, visit, and work.

As faith leaders, we realize that white supremacy has touched all institutions. We applaud and support the council’s efforts towards racial equity, and join you in our own faith communities, realizing that we too have work to do. We are preaching, teaching, and organizing small groups to uncover the truths about systems of white supremacy at work in our society and in ourselves. We are in this together.

Racial inequity and white supremacy is not a small problem, but neither is it an insurmountable one. We are shepherds of stories and stewards of vision. That vision is one of a world where those of all nations, tribes, peoples, and languages fully exist together in victorious harmony. That

victory will be won over the forces of evil that seek to divide us against one another along the tired lines of racism, misvalue us according to the dishonest scales of materialism, and mollify us with the false peace won through the use of violent force.

In our collective goal of creating an equitable, just, and righteous society in Bloomington, we must not be satisfied with half-steps. We will only truly find our satisfaction in fully striding towards justice. Our call for information and study of the racial data of our city's policing is but a half-step. It is important and necessary, but will be "justice denied" if we long delay full strides towards concrete action and further reform. We will continue to monitor, engage, and organize to make deep and meaningful reforms in our city and police department to root out all forms of systemic racial inequality

Sincerely,

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