

## Black Lives Matter Statement, August 2020

Oak Grove is an open and welcoming community. We share this value with our neighbors as we clearly display our Rainbow and Transgender Flags. A few years ago, Session's approved a Black Lives Matter sign to be put in front of the church. That sign was promptly stolen. Following the death of George Floyd, Oak Grove once again displayed a Black Lives Matter sign. The church has received two calls and the pastors had an anonymous email questioning the appropriateness of the sign from people who are not members of the church. The callers disparaged the Black Lives Matter organization. The following are portions from the Presbyterian Church (USA) article, *Why we say: Presbyterians affirm Black Lives Matter\**  
<https://www.pcusa.org/weekofaction/#2>

This article may help each of us articulate our own values and that of Oak Grove's.

- **Why are we saying that “Presbyterian Affirm Black lives Matter?** Simply put: because black lives do indeed matter. They/we matter to God, which mean they/we should matter to God's people....
- **But don't all lives matter?** Saying unequivocally that “Black lives Matter” in not that all lives do not matter. It is rather an acknowledgment that many lives-specifically Black lives-are systemically devalued. As a community that tries to follow Jesus, we proclaim that such a devaluation of our siblings is an affront to the Living God...Specificity toward Black lives is necessary, particularly in this moment, so that we may acknowledge and address the inequities that prevent the whole community from living as if all lives matter.
- **Does that mean we are claiming affiliation with the Black Lives Matter organization?** As an organization, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has no affiliation or official status with the Black Lives Matter Movement....
- **I am sorry but I can't agree with supporting the Black Lives Matter organization.** We understand that there are those in our community who do not agree with positions of the Black Lives Matter Movement as they understand them. Presbyterians have always been invited to use discernment in matters of faith and practice, understanding that 'God alone is the Lord of the conscience....'
- **I fear that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is getting too political...** Presbyterians have long been 'political.' Civic engagement has always been part for the life of the church...Christianity is inherently political. The word 'political' has its root in the Greek word for 'people.' Jesus commanded us to love God and neighbor. Our faith can never be extricated from our concerns for people.
- **Affirming that Black lives Matter is very much in line with who we are as Presbyterians,** and while the gospel of Jesus Christ is political, it is not partisan. It is not in service to any one political party or leaning but challenges all of us to have righteous relationships with one another. We believe that justice for the oppressed is not and should not be a partisan

value. Justice is a gospel value, one that all who claim Jesus as Lord should hold. We may have different ideas of how to live into the value, but as Christians we are beholden to it.

\*See also PCUSA Racial Justice Resources and Presbyterian Week of Action

<https://www.pcusa.org/racial-justice-resources/>

<https://www.pcusa.org/weekofaction/>

For further questions please email or call Pastor Anne or Pastor Mary.