

STATEMENT OF BOSTA ON RACIAL STRIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States has experienced tremendous strife over the recent tragic killings of a number of young black men and women, including George Floyd in Minneapolis, Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Ahmaud Arbery in Satilla Shores, Georgia, Michael Brown in St. Louis, Sandra Bland in Waller County, Texas, Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Eric Garner in New York City, Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Laquan McDonald in Chicago, and many others. We know that this loss of life, often at the hands of the police, stems from systemic racism and white supremacy and are but a small number of the black lives lost throughout our country's founding and history. In short, we the BOSTA condemn all the actions and procedures that resulted in the loss of life. The deaths of these individuals and many others have renewed dialogue about what the author Jim Wallis has called "America's original sin of racism." The events in Charlottesville, Virginia, similarly brought the realities of racism, bigotry, and white supremacy further to the forefront of our nation's consciousness. Across the country, people from all backgrounds—many of them, especially white people, and even members of The BOSTA for the first time—are confronting the destructive legacy wrought by generations of systemic and personal racial discrimination. Most recently the filmed interaction between Christian Cooper and Amy Cooper in Central Park brought to the forefront the underlying current of racism and racial power dynamics in the United States today. The protests of the recent killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer have sparked the U.S. consciousness on the issues of police brutality, racism, and the dignity of black lives, issues that are ever-present but not always discussed or uplifted in all parts of society.

There are no easy answers, but our faith can be an important lens through which to analyze these realities and that helps us to discern the steps towards social action. We the BOSTA follow the great commandment to love thy neighbor. We recognize the greatest commandment is to love the lord your God with all your heart. Secondly, to love each other as God loves you.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry raised the New Testament parable of the Good Samaritan, who stopped to give aid to a man who had been beaten and left on the side of the road.

"Only the Samaritan saw the wounded stranger and acted," Curry said. "Love, as Jesus teaches, is action like this as well as attitude. It seeks the good, the well-being, and the welfare of others as well as one's self."

In a message to his "dear brothers and sisters in the United States," Pope Francis advised, "We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life."

For in Matthew 15:21-28, it states: "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." This story in Matthew's Gospel details Jesus' encounter with a Canaanite woman. Her nationality makes her an outsider, and on this basis even Jesus rejects her when she comes seeking his help for her daughter. But the Canaanite woman challenges Jesus on his refusal, and Jesus praises her faith and heals her daughter after all. This story demonstrates that God's love is so expansive, it can surprise and stretch even Jesus Christ himself. It encourages Christians to be mindful of our own prejudices and understand that God's love isn't as restrictive as our own.

It is this transformative spirit, in seeking Reconciliation for the past sins of racism, that we must achieve if we are to move forward reconciled to one another in a sense of love and unity, and to do so we must acknowledge the sins of the past. We must engage in active dialogue

to discuss it, no matter how uncomfortable such a discussion may be. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu said: "Our common experience in fact is the opposite—that the past, far from disappearing or lying down and being quiet, has an embarrassing and persistent way of returning and haunting us unless it has in fact been dealt with adequately. Unless we look the beast in the eye, we find it has an uncanny habit of returning to hold us hostage."

The BOSTA's Committee on Racial Justice & Reconciliation's Vision Statement, in part, reads: "Racism is an issue that has to be faced in a straight forward and courageous manner and what better place for this work to occur than in the Brotherhood Of St Andrew, where we all share a commitment to someone larger than ourselves who can help us find the courage to travel on the road to racial healing and reconciliation."

We the BOSTA hereby commit to doing the hard work of Reconciliation by Study, by learning to engage in "Courageous Conversations," which are conversations used to help people learn how to have difficult conversations in healthy ways. One of the most important things we can do to help bring healing is to simply have dialogue where we seek to learn from and understand the other instead of becoming hostile, combative, and more entrenched in our own positions.

We the BOSTA hereby commit to doing the hard work of Reconciliation by Prayer, through the readings and reflections on scriptures for justice, lament and solidarity.

We the BOSTA hereby commit to doing the hard work of Reconciliation by Service, by engaging in actions such as joining groups that have people of different skin color: Civic Groups, Affinity Groups based on a shared hobby or interest or skill.

For by the reaffirmation of our threefold disciplines of Study, Prayer & Service, and by orientating them toward Racial Reconciliation, we can effectively do our part in the creation of The Beloved Community.