

From the Pastor's Desk

“An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.” -- Mahatma Gandhi

I have watched the lack of respect for the Black male experience in America and South Africa. In the past, I have been stopped while driving and shopping black! Therefore, to visually see the murder of black males, touches deeply within my soul and being. Any male, regardless of their ethnicity, should be beyond anger and frustration. We must demand better treatment from our law enforcement community, as well as, humanity. Likewise, we should hold them accountable and responsible for their actions. Race relations need our attention and discussion. It starts with me and you. Some believe it starts from the top (the President) and moves downward. There is some local government truth to that reality, yet, real change starts locally. Jesus says, “Love God and love the neighbor.” It is crucial that we become agents of change, peacemakers and participants in society and culture. Voting is key in our world and is crucial for the change that we need and expect.

Moreover, I have watched the media attempts to craft the story in a manner to fuel the anger and pain of our community. I have watched the marches for justice and awareness of police brutality. Yet, the peaceful marches transformed into destruction by persons ceasing the opportunity to destroy and loot businesses. Most marches for civil rights did not end with destruction and looting. The current protesters taking to the street can learn from their parents and grandparents who marched in their lifetime. In 1987, Pamela and I were part of the march led by Rev. Hosea Williams in Forsyth County, Georgia. There were 20,000 marchers on that day, and there were no incidents. The objective for that march was clear and given specific direction by the organizers. Forsyth County needed to change and embrace all persons. Therefore, please hold the individuals around you accountable for their actions. It pains my heart to see our young people inflict pain, hurt and destruction in our communities. The actions and repercussions will be felt and actualized for years. There are consequences for the actions taken place over the past week. Let us pray that our streets and communities settle down, and we really begin the belated discussion on race and the retraining of our Law Enforcement departments. God created this world, and God uniquely created you and me.

Prior to our appointment to Warren Memorial, I was the Pastor of Lithonia First United Methodist Church. The church was categorized as a cross racial and cross cultural church. This description meant that the church had four distinct cultures within the church body. The four cultures were: White, Black, African and Islanders. I was their Pastor for eight years and we were able to get along and experienced growth, and not decline or experience an exodus from the church. The key to our fellowship and discipleship was Christ was our center and not our differences. Rodney King was right, “We can get along!” Again, accountability and responsibility are a reality and must and will continue to take place. Remember, the Bible says, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay...” God is still in control.

Pastor Leon

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