

CLERGY RESPOND TO CHARLOTTESVILLE

In Worship:

Prayers

Gracious Mystery, you chose to take on the brown skin of a Palestinian Jew. You once called a woman of another race a dog, but she said, "Even the dogs get fed by the master." You changed your mind. You healed her daughter and then hung out with her people. You went where no good Jew would go, you overcame your racism and set an example for us. Help us. We pray for forgiveness of racism and prejudice. We pray as great, great, grandchildren of those who fought a war to free those whose great, great, grandchildren who were slaves. We recognize our own history and silence around race. We pray for #Charlottesville. May you reign in our hearts and transform them from hearts of stone to hearts of love alone. May we stand boldly for your love and peace. May we help others to see that one can't be a Nazi and a patriot as we fought a war over that and the whole world was involved. Likewise we can't be Christian and hate, as you said that they would know us by our love. So may we love, in your many names. Amen.

Rev. Luke Lindon
Medina United Church of Christ

We are in a moment, Holy One. A terrifying, make-or-break moment. We cannot say we didn't see it coming. White supremacy has always had a seat at America's table. Yesterday it marched, unmasked and celebratory in the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia.

Here at home, it rained. All day. No one remembers the last time it rained all day in August in Oklahoma. It was as if You were weeping, Holy One, tears that would not stop falling. We cannot say that we do not know why. White supremacy, slavery, racism - the original sin of our county, for which white Christians have not repented. We confess it, Lord. We confess it.

But confession is not enough. As the prophet Micah reminds us, You require us to do justice. We know what that looks like. It looks like the college students who held firm with their rejection of racism as they were surrounded by the KKK. It looks like the clergy and lay folk who put their bodies at risk to counter the Nazis parade. It looks like the first responders who ran toward the people screaming for help.

We know what to do and now we must do it. That is all there is to say. As long as "Unite the Right" exists in word or deed, we will work to Undo the Unjust, until every Lee Park becomes Emancipation Park, until Black Lives Matter.

We are in a moment, Holy One. Let our hearts not fail us. Amen.

Rev. Lori Walke
Mayflower Congregational UCC

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In Worship:

Sermons

Sermon - Rev. Moira Finley Tri-Jo Parish United Church of Christ

I spent last week immersed in Haiti, separated but for a few brief moments from any kind of media, except when the Haitian national football (soccer) team was playing on the TV at the guest house. It was a soul stretching, heart opening, heart breaking incredible time renewing relationships formed last year, and starting the work of new relationships too.

It will take me days, if not weeks, to sort out all the things I think and feel about my time there, to get pictures ready to show you, and to know how it will affect my life in the coming year. I'm not entirely sure I'm ready to be home, and I am completely sure that I will be going back next year.

Our flights home brought us through Atlanta, Georgia and when the plane landed I did what almost everyone does now, I turned my phone on to catch up on everything I had missed. There were several hundred emails, messages from friends, and one missed voice mail message, reminders of life at home.

But then, there was the breaking news from Charlottesville, Virginia.

A group of people had gathered for a prayer meeting, a time for worship, at a church on the University of Virginia campus. They were from all kinds of Christian denominations, clergy and laity alike, and had gathered to prepare themselves. They were there, in that church, because for more than two months a group of white supremacists had been planning a march and rally for Saturday, what they hoped would be the largest gathering of white supremacists in history.

The people in the church intended to have a counter rally, to be witnesses of inclusivity, love, and grace. They gathered to pray, to center their hearts, to commit to nonviolence, to remind themselves of Jesus' third way of being in the world – not inflicting violence, nor being a doormat, but standing firm in the truth.

While those folks were gathering, and praying, a group of the white supremacists started marching towards the church with torches lit, shouting chants like "white power" and "blood and soil", one of the slogans of the Nazi party in Germany. The white supremacists were there, surrounding a peaceful gathering of prayerful people, trying to intimidate them, to keep them from showing up on Saturday morning in counter protest.

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My momma told me lots of stories of things like that happening when she was working with the Civil Rights Movement, of church meetings being surrounded by members of the Ku Klux Klan, of crosses being burned on the lawns of faithful people, of intimidation, lynching, and more.

Those folks, almost without exception, wore the robe and pointed hoods we associate with the KKK, hiding their identities as school teachers, bus drivers, the people you worked beside at the factory, store clerks, pastors, and more. They were afraid, at least a little, of people finding out who they were, and that they were participating in this kind of racist hatred and terror.

Friday night was different. This time, in 2017, the white supremacists weren't wearing robes and hoods. They were dressed in t-shirts and jeans, most of them making no attempt to hide their identities. They walked openly in the streets, making the Nazi salute, these people, almost all men, were not in the least bit ashamed of their hatred, hostility, and terrorism. Eventually there was a clash between the white supremacists and some folks who were outside the church (none of the people involved in the prayer gathering), but in time it was all dispersed calmly.

Then came Saturday.

The people who had been in the church the night before gathered, this time with our brothers and sisters of many faiths. They spread themselves out around the area where the racist white supremacists were intending to march, prepared to be a presence of love in a sea of hatred.

The racists came, carrying bats, and sticks, and wearing brass knuckles. The police and national guard were kept back, watching as the already high emotions reached a boiling point.

The UCC's Rev. Traci Blackmon, the head of our national Justice and Witness office, was being interviewed by MSNBC when suddenly she was pulled off camera. She and other clergy were attacked.

Many people from the counter protest, the voice of love, people working for peace and unity, were beaten as the racists also sprayed pepper spray and, because Virginia is an open carry state, waved their guns while shouting Nazi slogans, demanding the United States be an exclusively white nation, waving the flag of the Confederacy and the Nazi flag.

And again, these folks were not wearing robes and hoods, not covering their faces, not

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hiding who they are. They felt no shame at being seen as racists and hate mongers.

Of course, they would rather be called the alt-right, or the traditional workers party, or any other group of names that would try to clean up their image, to gloss over the fact that they're calling for discrimination at best, and outright murder of anyone who is black, or brown, or native American, or Jewish, or Muslim, or simply different than their twisted image of an ideal person.

They came, claiming to be patriots, trying to preserve the United States, to keep it pure and white. When the president spoke he said that there was blame to be had on both sides, because there had been violence on both sides.

The president refused to condemn the hatred, racism, and let's call it what it is, terrorism, of the white supremacists even when later in the day a car intentionally drove into a crowd of people, killing one woman and injuring many more, that car driven by a white supremacist.

But truer words came from Virginia governor Terry McAuliffe who said, in part, "I have a message to all the white supremacists and the Nazis who came into Charlottesville today. Our message is plain and simple. Go home. You are not wanted in this great commonwealth. Shame on you. You pretend that you're patriots, but you are anything but a patriot. ... You came here today to hurt people, and you did hurt people. But my message is clear, we are stronger than you. You have made our commonwealth stronger. You will not succeed. There is no place for you here, there is no place for you in America."

And now you're thinking to yourself, maybe all that's true pastor, but this sounds like politics. What does it have to do with being in church, with faith, with Jesus, and all that stuff you're supposed to be talking about in worship?

It has everything to do with our faith, and is precisely what we must be talking about in worship this morning for two reasons.

The first is that the white nationalists, racists, and Nazis came to Charlottesville claiming to Christians. The organizer of the rally and march says that G-d has ordained him as a leader to help reclaim this land as the birthright of white people. They came, trying to cloak their hatred, and bigotry, and violence in the same faith we confess.

They are taking what we believe and distorting it, twisting it, and using it as a justification for the most reprehensible acts. We have to be talking about what they're saying, and what they're doing, here in worship of all places, because they're doing it in our name.

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They're trying to say that our faith and theirs are the same, and unless we talk about it, unless we together think, and pray, and work to make distinctions between the way we practice our faith and the way the white supremacists do we will all be lumped together the very same way that ISIS and Al Qaeda become lumped together with good, and faithful Muslims.

The second reason we have to be talking about this here, in church, together as G-d's faithful people is because of Jesus.

Jesus spent his life speaking out against the powers of evil, of discrimination, of all that would separate us from one another. He constantly spoke about challenging systems that isolated people, that prohibited them from sharing in the common good. He wanted to widen the table, to welcome everyone, to sit with saints and sinners alike and share the abundance of G-d's love.

Not once that I can think of did Jesus advocate marching, armed with clubs, and bats against another group of people.

Not once did he say it was ok to exclude a group of people because of their skin color, or their religion, or who they love.

Not once did he tell his followers to go out and only associate with people who are like them.

Instead, Jesus spoke about love, and grace, and mercy extended to all. More than that, Jesus actively taught, and spoke, and preached, and lived an opposition to evil, to the demonic powers that take hold of people, and of institutions. He called out the demons, and opposed the evil because they were against all that G-d stands for, all that G-d desires for the world. Jesus was so committed to the calling out of evil that eventually it cost him his life.

What else should people who claim to be his followers be talking about this morning, in the brutal aftermath of Charlottesville?

If we were to have ignored what happened, if I had gone on with the sermon I had planned about Joseph and his brothers, if we had pretended that the racism, and violence, and bigotry that showed itself in Virginia has nothing to do with us then we would be just as guilty as those who showed up, armed with clubs and bats, arguing for discrimination and hate.

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If we had gone on this morning we would be just as complicit as the terrorist, fueled by hatred who drove his car into the crowd, killing a woman and injuring many more.

As Christians, as people who put our trust in G-d made known to us through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, as people who claim his name, who claim to follow in his footsteps, to try and live as he did then we have no choice. In the face of the evil in our country, the evil of white supremacy, of blatant Nazi sympathy, of hatred, and bigotry, and discrimination silence is simply not an option.

Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, someone who knew the dangers of Nazism first hand once said, "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

We can't sit by as our neighbors, and colleagues, and friends, and maybe even members of our family stand up to be counted with the powers of evil.

We have to speak up, to be counted, to say that the G-d of Jesus Christ is one of love, and hope, and unity, that our faith is about bringing people together rather than dividing them.

We have to stand with Jesus, not on the sidelines, but in the thick of things, calling people to account when casual racism and hatred slip into our lives with jokes, and insults.

We have to stand with Jesus when policies of discrimination, and bigotry prevent people from living freely, from receiving fair and free education, or access to the legal system, or the ability to start a business, and so much more.

We have to hold ourselves accountable for the ways that we benefit from a system rigged against so many others, and work to change the system so all truly can be equal.

This feels like a pivotal moment in our collective history, where we have a chance to decide quite clearly what side we are on.

Will we raise the tiki torches of the Nazis, and white supremacists, the racists and terrorists from Friday night and Saturday? Or will we raise the torch of the Statue of Liberty, one that shines as a beacon of hope to all those who struggle?

Will we side, silently, with those who are advocating racism, discrimination, bigotry, and violence? Or, will we side, with all our heart, and mind, and soul, with Jesus, with those who are advocating inclusion, diversity, unity, and love? Amen.

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In Worship:

Sermon (An Excerpt)
Rev. Jeffrey Spencer

Before I get into my sermon, I need to say some things about what has transpired over the past 40 hours in Charlottesville, Virginia. As you know, a group of at least a thousand white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and Klu Klux Klanners gathered there, along with five to six thousand counter-protestors. It did not take long for things to turn violent, but then the mere rallying of white nationalists is in and of itself violent for people of color. According to the LA Times, the violence started within the white supremacist rally. The violence peaked when a car was driven at high speed into a crowd of counter-protestors, apparently on purpose by a white supremacist, killing one and injuring many others.

I suspect that the vast majority of the white supremacists gathered in Charlottesville consider themselves to be Christians. But “supremacy” is the precise opposite of Jesus’ message. Jesus calls us to love one another – even our enemies – and to place others’ needs before our own, even to die for one another. The idea of ‘supremacy’ is absurd to Jesus. Racism goes against everything that Jesus taught. It promotes hatred, not love; anger, not compassion; vengeance, not mercy. It is a sin.

“So,” as Father James Martin put it, “‘Christian white supremacist’ is an oxymoron. Every time you shout ‘White Power!’ you might as well be shouting ‘Crucify him!’ And any time you lift your hand in a Nazi salute, you might as well be lifting your hand to nail Jesus to the Cross. And lest you miss the point, your Savior is Jewish.”

Now, I don’t think there are any who disagree with what I’ve said. There may be some who are uncomfortable with the tone or the framing, but I’d be very surprised if any of you disagree with the substance. So, why did I say it? Because I needed to. Week after week, I get up here in this pulpit to preach the gospel of Jesus and when something is happening in the world that violates the gospel, I need to say so. To be silent is insufficient. White silence is violence. To be silent is to offer my consent. And I do not consent to racism.

Sermon - Rev. Ellen Sims
Open Table UCC

After yesterday’s events in Charlottesville, I ditched the sermon I’d planned to preach today. The violence we witnessed yesterday is on our minds and hearts, so we need to speak of it. Maybe like me, you have been rattled by the white supremacist hate mongers. As I watched fellow clergy put their lives on the line yesterday, I was startled by how easily I placed myself in those televised scenes. And ashamed for the times I’ve almost blithely

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marched the streets of Mobile with you in protest of injustice, how I've taken for granted the privilege of gathering with you for a prayer vigil, and how fearlessly we've spoken at rallies or town hall meetings. We have been aware of some risk on those occasions. But what happened yesterday seems different. Unlike, for example, the Pulse massacre committed by one person, the fatalities were fewer at Charlottesville but the violence went viral as an armed mob replaced a lone gunman. So this morning's sermon may sound disjointed. Because I feel disjointed. Because, as Hamlet said, "The time is out of joint."

Our hearts go out to the families and friends of Heather Heyer, who died as a brave ally, and to the loved ones of the two police officers who died while patrolling by helicopter, and to the nineteen injured when a car was used as a weapon aimed at a crowd, and others injured by various ways that a mob does violence. We take time again to remember these in silent prayer. . . .

What is the church's response to proud racism? A few people I know responded to yesterday's events by criticizing the "counter-protesters" because they were seen as just drawing more attention to the neo-Nazis and stoking the flames of hatred.

There is that risk. But ignoring bad behavior is the strategy a teacher might use to disempower the class clown. "Just ignore him, class" isn't going to silence or de-escalate the rabid racists. Clearly, the national leadership of the United Church of Christ felt that a public witness against racism was necessary even though potentially dangerous. The UCC has often spoken out against racial injustice in counter-cultural ways.

In 1846, the first anti-slavery society with multiracial leadership was organized by the Congregationalists, a predecessor denomination of the UCC.

In 1959, because many Southern television stations refused to report news of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr. asked the UCC to intervene, so our denomination fought for and won a historic federal ruling that declared the airwaves are public property. In 1973 the Wilmington Ten were civil rights workers charged with arson of a white-owned grocery store. One of them was a UCC missionary and community organizer. All but one were black. Convinced the charges were false, the UCC's General Synod raised more than a million dollars to pay for bail. (See UCC Firsts)

What is the church's response to racism and violence? Sometimes we in the UCC take it to the streets, as Rev. Traci Blackmon and other UCC leaders did yesterday in Charlottesville and as she did in Ferguson following the shooting of Michael Brown almost exactly three years ago. In a newspaper article about her leadership in the Black Lives Matter movement, I discovered excerpts from Traci's sermon the Sunday after a police officer shot and killed

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18-year-old, unarmed Michael Brown. Because the same lectionary readings cycle around every three years, her sermon then was based on today's very same Hebrew Bible text: the story of Elijah fleeing for his life and hiding in a cave.

You may remember that before becoming Executive Minister of Justice and Witness Ministries, Rev. Blackmon was pastor at Christ the King UCC near Ferguson. She is also a mother of African American sons. One day before Michael Brown's funeral, Traci preached from 1 Kings 19 about Elijah hiding in a cave after threats on his life. She compared Elijah's plight to that of people of color "who have been in a cave far too long" and "living in neighborhoods structured for containment, rather than community." She continued, "I'm talking about those of us who live quiet lives with low expectations – we lose our collective potential because we have been hurt so long and so much that we are scared to try anything else. So we do just enough to get by, just enough to stay alive but not enough to thrive, just enough to keep breathing. But we won't risk anything to go to the next level." But she reminded those in attendance that "the Lord found Elijah in the cave," she said. "Aren't you glad that every now and then, the Lord will come and find you?"

The Lord found Rev. Blackmon and is using her to draw many out of the caves we're hiding in.

To segue to our Gospel reading, God is also drawing many of us out of the safety of the boats we're cowering in.

An early symbol of the Church was a boat, an ark like Noah's that saved God's people. In times of persecution the mast of a sailing vessel could be depicted to look like a cross—but disguised—as a secret sign of the church. The architectural term for the main body of a medieval church is the nave, from the Latin, "navis," which means ship. (It's the same word from which we get "navy"). That's because the arched beams make the ceiling of a cathedral look like the inside of an upside down ship's hull.

Our Gospel story today places the disciples cowering in the church boat. In this scene we hear liturgical language that the church used early on and still today. Peter's call for help—"Lord, save me!"—is a prayer, of course. When Jesus got into the boat with Peter, the wind ceased "and those in the boat worshiped him." Those in the boat called Jesus "Son of God," a confession of faith. This Gospel story pictures the church gathered in worship. These liturgical features of the boat/church story are additions Matthew gave to the similar story from Mark's Gospel. Matthew uses this metaphor to convey the dangers and doubts those in the countercultural Church will experience with the winds against it. Matthew acknowledges the exhilaration and fear that following Jesus may provoke while prompting the question of when to hunker down in the church and when to venture out

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of the church. (See Overman, J. Andrew. *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew. The New Testament in Context.* Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996.)

We're hunkering down this morning after experiencing yesterday the raw violence of racism. But soon we'll venture out again into the turbulent events in our society. In faith, we'll meet Jesus there. Remember that in antiquity the sea was associated with danger, chaos, and demons. The boat of the church navigates through such waters. But Peter's role in the story raises the possibility that sometimes some of us find Jesus by leaving the boat/church. Peter, who became the rock on which Jesus built the church, encountered Jesus dramatically in a liminal place between doubt and faith. Jesus, who appeared to his frightened followers walking across the stormy seas, can meet us inside and outside the church.

Some of you may have experienced Jesus powerfully outside the church—and sadly, may have felt distanced from Jesus inside the church at times. In the context of yesterday's events, we can imagine Peter's encounter with Jesus outside the church boat by picturing ways we step outside the church boat to walk faithfully with Jesus. The clergy who yesterday locked arms and knelt in prayer before a line of KKKers had stepped outside the church boat into violent waters. I think Jesus then came and found them in that street and "stretched out his hand" and led them back to the safety of the boat with him. Thank God. I trust those brave souls are taking time this morning, as we are, to sit with Jesus as the winds calm and the waters gentle.

What is the church's response to racism and violence? Sometimes we gather in this inclusive and capacious church boat. But sometimes we, individually or collectively, leave the boat to activate our faith, to respond to Jesus despite doubts, to meet a new challenge, to know the saving power of God amidst the violence and chaos. Sometimes that means we help end the ancestor worship of heroes cast in bronze who defended slavery. Sometimes we declaim that peaceful protesters bear no responsibility for the violence those with evil intent have planned and salivated for in darkness. Sometimes we leave the cave of cowardice and complacency to act for justice.

Traci asked her church three years ago, "Aren't you glad that every now and then, the Lord will come and find you?"

I know I am.

PRAYER:

For the shelter of the ship, and for the challenge of the seas, we give you thanks, O God, and ask for courage and faith. May we continue to make room for all who wish to journey with us. Amen.

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In Worship:

Sermon - Rev. Sonja L. Ingebritsen
Madison Christian Community

Creation's Kinship

This sermon is one that is just born; one that is in first draft. We need a different word this morning than what I'd initially planned because of the events taking place in Charlottesville. I hadn't selected the scriptures suggested for today because I planned to go in another direction. But I want to call one of them to mind. The story is that of the second-generation humans, Adam and Eve's sons. Cain, angered that his brother's offering was blessed by their father and not his, killed Abel. When Adam asked later Cain where Abel was, the resentful brother said, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

So let's pray: May the words spoken and the words received, be only in your service, great God of Love. Amen.

In this Season of Creation, today is Land Sunday. Today is a celebration of the very earth herself, and the gifts of abundance she shares. Today is a celebration of the rich biodiversity, that is not only beautiful, but necessary for a healthy ecosystem. Today is a celebration that all of this wonder and bounty comes from our Creator, who looked upon all that was and is being made and calls it "Good, very good."

Humanity itself, is made from the same substance as the soil. We are not separate from creation. Earth is our kin; and we are Earth's. We are part of the gifts and abundance that God has made and called "very good." A celebration of the land, of the earth, must include a celebration of the rich diversity within humanity, as well. The vastness of human characteristics and culture is necessary for healthy humanity, and is to be celebrated as part of God's bounty.

Today is also a time to acknowledge the ways in which we are complicit in harming the very creation that God names good. We use and abuse God's earth, assuming that creation is a resource for our exploitation and gain. We are only capable of destroying God's good creation in this way because of the sin of "selective amnesia," forgetting that we are kin to the mountains and valleys, fields and forests, two-leggeds and four-leggeds. It is that same sin, the selective amnesia about our creatureliness, that fosters some humans to view other humans as mere resource for gain or exploitation, or as less than human, thus elevating themselves for privilege and power they would deny to their kin.

This selective amnesia of kinship drives what we're seeing in Charlottesville this weekend. But atrocities of this kind are not new. As the vice mayor commented in a news report this

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morning, violent racism was present 50 year ago when the public schools decided to close rather than to integrate and when an African American neighborhood called Vinegar Hill was destroyed. It is not new, he said; it has never left.

Domestic terrorism in the name of white supremacy is what we're seeing in Charlottesville. Only it doesn't wear a sheet anymore. And, rest assured, it is not confined to Charlottesville or "the South." But let's talk first about how white supremacy **did** show up in Charlottesville, emblematic of our sin of forgetting kinship.

White supremacy showed up, unmasked, this weekend in the throng of thousands of threatening, young white men in polo shirts and khakis, who carried torches and baseball bats as they marched through UVA Friday night and then surrounded St. Paul Memorial Church at the end of the prayer service organized in response to the so-called "Unite the Right" rally planned for Saturday. Those inside the church were not safe to go to their cars. They needed to be escorted by the police or to escort one another. White supremacy showed up unmasked at the so-called "rally" on Saturday, in the cans filled with concrete that white nationalists threw at non-violent protestors, including clergy. Some of our own UCC clergy were in the line of fire, including our national UCC Executive for Justice and Witness Ministries, Rev. Traci Blackmon. White supremacy showed up unmasked as white nationalists antagonized and beat up anti-hate protestors. It showed up when a driver intentionally plowed his car into a group of non-violent protestors and then fled the scene, killing one and injuring 18 others.

White supremacy—unmasked—needs to be named for what it is.

But White supremacy also showed up IN its hood of protection, so that it would be harder to identify. It showed up in the way words were being used, and not. The white nationalist event was portrayed as a "rally." Yet, the word "riot" is almost universally used for groups of black and brown people who protest police violence or other ways in which white supremacy threatens their livelihoods and their bodies. The words "skirmishes" and "clashes" were used instead of "assaults" to describe the way groups of white nationalists set upon non-violent protestors with intent to harm. It showed up in our president's weak response yesterday, condemning hate and violence but assigning it to "many sides," and not clearly to the white nationalist perpetrators.

White supremacy showed up in its hood of protection when militiamen in fatigues openly carried semiautomatic rifles in the melee. Contrast this with how Philando Castille was gunned down in his vehicle by a police officer. Mr. Castille had been stopped because, in the officer's words (my paraphrase), "I could see as he drove by that he had a large nose, which matched a description of an African American man suspected of a crime."

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One of the first things Mr. Castille did when the officer came to his door was to tell him calmly that he had a gun in the car, for which he had a legal permit. "Are there any weapons in the car?" is a standard question. Mr. Castille chose to make the officer aware ahead of time. Then, when the officer asked for his ID, Mr. Castille reached into his back pocket, telling the officer, again calmly, that his ID was in his pocket and he was going to reach for it. In that moment, the officer shot him several times. Philando Castille bled to death in front of a small child who was in the back seat of the car when the officer shot into it and in front of the girl's mother, his girlfriend, who was sitting in the front seat and live-streamed what was happening.

Let me say it again. White supremacy showed up in its hood of protection when militiamen in fatigues openly carried semiautomatic rifles. Contrast that with 14-year-old Tamir Rice, who was lazily playing with a gun in a neighborhood park. The 911 caller had said it might be just a toy gun, but called in case it was real. A police cruiser sped into the park, and two seconds after arriving—one Mississippi, two Mississippi—the officer jumped out of the car and shot Tamir. The boy lay bleeding on the ground. His mother was arrested when she tried to get to him. Tamir was still alive at the time, but the officers failed to administer medical treatment. Tamir died of his gunshot wound.

White supremacy showed up in its hood of protection when Charlottesville police initially stood by while non-violent protestors were under assault by the white nationalist rioters. Consider that the police were not armed in full riot gear, carrying assault-style rifles, and forming battle lines with military-style vehicles. Contrast that to the police response in Ferguson, MO, where African Americans and their allies were peacefully protesting the gunning down of 18-year-old Michael Brown, who was shot by police and left for hours in the street, his body uncovered. The violent incidents of a few who were not connected to the non-violent resistance were the police department's excuse to militarize themselves, call in the National Guard, and to threaten, tear-gas, and detain the majority who were taking non-violent action.

White supremacy showed up in its hood of protection in Charlottesville when the words "domestic terrorism" failed to be used by the media, law enforcement, or our president. Surely the parade of torch-bearing white men shouting "You will not replace us!" "We're taking back our country!" and the Nazi slogan "Soil and blood!" was intended to terrorize people of color specifically, but also LGBT folk and other marginalized groups. Surely driving a vehicle at high speed into a crowd of anti-racist protestors and then fleeing, was meant as an act of terror. We are quick to name such actions "terrorist" when they are perpetrated by people of color or by one whose faith is, say, Muslim.

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White supremacy showed up in its hood of protection when that driver who slammed his vehicle into the crowd was neither immediately identified by name nor had his photograph distributed by police. His country of origin, his race, and his religious affiliation was not provided hastily. Yet, when people of color or non-Christians commit acts of terror, these details are immediately broadcasted, and are implicated as motive.

White supremacy showed up in its hood of protection in the police treatment of the motorist suspected of committing this act of terrorism, who was arrested without incident or harm. It brings back memories of Dylan Roof, the white man who was apprehended without incident after killing nine African Americans in Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston, SC. He was even taken to a fast food restaurant for a burger by the arresting officers because he was hungry. Contrast that to what happened to Micah Xavier Johnson, a Black suspect in the killing of five police officers in Dallas, TX, last year. The police did not “bring him in” unharmed. Instead, they sent an unmanned robot carrying a bomb into his hideout, and blew him up.

If we don’t understand how white supremacy showed up in its hood of protection in Charlottesville, how do we expect to see how cloaked white supremacy shows up in Madison and in our own beloved Madison Christian Community? Everywhere and anywhere that white bodies are considered more valuable than bodies of color, white supremacy is present. Everywhere and anywhere that so-called “good schools” and “good neighborhoods” are predominantly filled with white people, white supremacy is present. Everywhere and anywhere that European standards and values, patterns of speech—and even ways of worship—are privileged and viewed as simply “normal,” white supremacy is present.

Yet, as people of faith, as resurrection people, we believe that God, not white nationalism, will have the last word. Love, not hate, will have the last word. Reconciliation and restoration, not white supremacy, will have the last word.

We can see resurrection signs in the number of faith leaders and others who are putting their bodies on the line and raising their voices for the sake of their threatened kin in Charlottesville. We can see hope in our own church sanctuary when we view our “Black Lives Matter” lettering, our gay flag, and our “Be the Church” banner not as sanctuary decorations, but statements of faith. We see it in our pledge to be a sanctuary church for our undocumented kin who are in harm’s way.

We can see resurrection signs of love over hate in all kinds of places. Recently there have been protests on the southern border of Texas against the planned wall to cut off Mexico. Not only do the protesters speak about the unfair treatment of our immigrant kin, but also

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In Worship:

our butterfly kin, whose habitat will be torn up, and the animals whose currently protected sanctuary will be destroyed.

These efforts to protect people and planet are related, because WE are all related. As we treat the earth, we will treat one another. As we treat one another, we will treat the earth. On this Land Sunday, let us commit to consider all of God's beloved creation as our kin, the flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone. For we were once clay, and it was God who breathed life into us.

I end with a post made yesterday evening by Rev. Blackmon--

Confessions of a woman who preaches:

Casualties caused by BLM activist at protest in 3 years: 0

Casualties caused by White Supremacist in one day: 3 deaths, so far. 25 injuries requiring intervention and/or hospitalization.

Trump's response to BLM: "They are terrorist!"

Trump's response to the White Supremacist who elected him: "I blame many sides."

The thing that struck me most about these two days was the fact that the hooded sheets were gone.

The sheets have been replaced with polos and oxfords. Horses traded for Escalades and Sedans. Gasolines torches replaced by tiki torches. Rifles replaced by assault weapons. Ropes replaced by baseball bats. Burning crosses in yards dismissed for crosses in sanctuaries. And wooded areas abandoned for Capitol Hill.

We will still rise.

Hate has no weapon that Love will not conquer.

Amen.

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At the Rally

Good evening.

Thank you for coming out this evening. Thank you to all the organizers, co-sponsors, and everyone of you who changed your plans and followed your hearts to be here. Thank you to all the speakers for your strong, wise, and inspiring words.

Thank you for coming to speak out against white nationalism, and the hateful racism and anti-semitism that are at the heart of it. To stand with our African American and Jewish neighbors, Muslim Americans and immigrants from the world over. To proclaim with your bodies that racial injustice and violence will not stand. To let your light shine in the darkness that surrounds us.

You are beautiful. You are powerful. You are beloved.

And if you're anything like me, you are also angry. You are also hurting. You may be disheartened and discouraged. If that's how you felt when you got here this evening, I hope you're feeling better now.

Because hatred will not win the day. Rage alone will not turn the tide. We have hard internal work to do—to address our own racism.

Dr. King said it best: "Hatred cannot drive out hatred. Only love can do that."

I saw a whole lot of hatred in Charlottesville yesterday. Hatred that turned my stomach. I saw a lot of evil yesterday—evil that tempted me to despair about the state of our country and even the nature of our humanity.

But here's the thing: As much evil as I saw, I saw still more love: People from all walks of life, of all ages of races, people of different faiths and no faith, putting their bodies on the line. Making a difference. Loving all that is good and just, loving each other.

I learned this morning that a young man who grew up in my church, a young man who went on service trips to Nicaragua and worked with the little kids in Sunday School, was in Charlottesville yesterday. After the police had finally dispersed the white supremacists, Sam was in a group of counter-protestors heading to an African American neighborhood where the Nazis and other haters were headed. Sam and his friends were on their way to make a stand in that neighborhood, to protect the people who lived there, when a hate-filled car came barreling down the street.

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Sam survived, but he was injured. He is now a victim of domestic racist terrorism. Sam is shaken up, but he is held by more love today than he has ever known. He is discovering the kind of love that drives out hatred.

I invite you to look around. Look deeply at the other people here—people you may not know. People who may look different than you. People who may be very different from you. People that, just like you, are made in the image of Love. Do you love them? Can you consider loving someone who hates you?

That is the love that can drive out hatred. That is what this moment in our nation requires of us. We must stand on the side of love.

The writer and social activist Adrienne Maree Brown says that “Things are not getting worse, they are getting uncovered.”

Well. I’m sure we could have some very lively discussions about that, and I hope we will. But she also says this about the evil hatred that is getting uncovered, in such painful and frightening ways:

“We must hold each other tight and continue to pull back the veil.”

That is my prayer for all of us tonight and going forward. That we will hold each other tight. That we will love with all our might.

And then, my friends, we will have driven out hatred. We will have healed the deep wounds of this nation.

So let’s get to work.

Thank you.

Rev. Vicki Kemper
First Church Amherst

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Additional Reflections from United Church of Christ Ministers/Members

As a white Christian pastor, I am here to repent for the white supremacy of my people. As a queer pastor, I know that calls for repentance have been used to abuse too many of my people. I use the word differently tonight. Repentance is the first spiritual step of justice-making that is required to honor the centuries of oppression our Jewish, Black, Brown and Indigenous neighbors have endured at our hands and by our complicity.

My fellow white Christians, please join me in a prayer of repentance if you feel so moved: Holy One, we confess the original and on-going sins of white supremacy that haunt and kill on this stolen Dakota land we stand upon tonight, in this state and in this country. We offer You our hearts cracked open by grief and horror. Remind us that You chose to speak 2,000 years ago through a Brown, Jewish Rabbi we call Jesus. Humble us to listen to Your wisdom today as our Jewish, Black, Brown and Indigenous neighbors speak their sacred truths and demands. Make of us instruments of solidarity for your holy justice and fierce love.

Rev. Ashley Harness
Lyndale United Church of Christ

We are a community of ACTION.
We are a community of COURAGE.
We are a community of GRACE.
We are a community of FAITH.
We have FAITH in our shared humanity.

FAITH in each other, and FAITH that we must be a better people.

48 years ago these streets in York were the site of race riots between blacks and whites.
50 years ago was the Summer of Love.

What we have been doing isn't doing enough.

I will NOT listen to our politicians who meet with hate groups in closed-door meetings any more, when they tell us that the real problem are those who work against hate groups.
I will NOT listen to our politicians who show up to events for photo opportunities when they shake their heads and say they don't know why this is happening.

I will NOT listen to revisionist historians whose whiteness has blinded their ability to see what is plainly in front of them.

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I will NOT accept the LIE of EQUIVOCATION that fault in protest lies with the oppressed and those who stand with the marginalized and oppressed.

I will NOT pretend that the new wave of Neo-Confederate and White Supremacists is an innovation prompted by an election.

BUT I will make clear that white supremacy is all around us, everywhere in York, and has never gone away. It has only changed.

I will NOT pretend that white supremacists don't sit in the pews of churches. I will NOT pretend that the church has not been the incubator of intolerance in our country.

I will NOT pretend not to notice that you can purchase confederate flags and neon glow stick toys from the same vendors at parades in Dover and Dallastown.

It is time for the faith community to join with the community of nonbelievers in America to become a unified community of resistance.

It is time to be poor in spirit, and be makers of peace.

It is time now for white churches to proclaim that Black lives matter, because the silence or qualification is deafening. And evil.

It is time for us to speak, to speak with tongues of FIRE, and to be silent and listen and be challenged.

If they have torches, remember: we have light.

If they have torches, we have light to bring.

If they have torches, we have light.

But how bright will WE burn?

AMEN.

Rev. Christopher D. Rodkey (with a quote from Robert Saler)
St. Paul's United Church of Christ

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At the Rally

Reflections:

Poem 1

You (all five of you) walked in to the ER
With blood on your clothes.
Hit by sticks.
Beaten by shields
Thrust into you.
Police say that you can't have your backpacks inside.
(Why didn't they tell me that, as I sat with my own in the waiting room?)
You are still bleeding
Beyond the bandages.
I take your bags to my car.
You go back and are stitched,
Stitched,
Stitched.
Hours pass.
Hospital on lockdown.
Security check,
Security check.
Three of you are released.
You want to return to the rally,
With hospital bracelets and bruises
And cuts.
Wait, wait—
People have been hit by a car.
Twenty stretchers lined up outside.
Clean white sheets pristine
For now.
Get back, get back.
Security check, security check.
There is not enough room in the ER to triage
So the lobby of the hospital is made into triage.
Siren one,
Siren two,
Siren blue.
The other two of you are released.
"I had to get plastic surgery," you tell me.
Your treatment took five hours.
"I am worried about my transgender friend.

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She's elderly and was left alone at the church.
Let's go look for her."
Driving through the streets.
Nazi flag,
Smoke.
She is at the church,
Safe?
Are we?
When I get home I find that I too
Have bruises.
Siren one,
Siren two,
Code blue.

Poem 2

There are not many sides....
There is one side.
The side of the Love that
Takes what is broken into
Her arms
And does not let go.
There is one side.
The side of the Presence
That knows ashes and the
Way to rise from them.
There is one side.
The side of the blessing
And the belovedness.
The side of the One who
Never forgets his way in the world,
And tells us to remember
It together.

Rev. Laura Martin
Rock Spring Congregational Church
(From Gift in Open Hands)

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God, unite us with a furious passion we have never known to stamp out all that would divide us in hate. Redeem us from the pit of despair and in your mercy comfort all who mourn. Let us not pretend that meekness is acceptable. Help us find the words and actions that are needed. Draw us together and equip us for such a time as this.

Terry Yasuko Ogawa

Approved for Ordination in the O'ahu Association of the UCC

Podcast: "After Charlottesville"

Conversations, A Park Church Podcast

The events in Charlottesville have rocked our nation... what can our tradition do to help?

Jon Beren Propper

Park Church

Hate has no weapon that Love will not conquer! I believe that...I want to believe that and yet those images of bodies flung around by a moving car stays with me. So I pray for strength to rise and stand with those who are seen as less than -to hold fast to the image of God's people united in love - to let Love guide - sustain and lead me - to let love conquer the fear and the hate that I confess lays deep within - a flaw of my human condition.

Rev. Carlos Jauhola-Straight

South Congregational Church