

A Call to Lamentation and Action

Bishop: We lament that the Tennessee Annual Conference was part of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, a branch of Methodism that sinfully supported the enslavement of human beings, denying their equality and the very image of God. We lament the later creation of the Central Jurisdiction and its history of segregated ministry.

Lord, Have Mercy.

The People: We lament.

Bishop: We lament teachings in our church's past that spread harmful theology, reinforcing ideas of slavery from the pulpit and in our Sunday school classes and church publications. Our predecessors in ministry have preached sinful words that continue to echo today in racist and hateful language that denies the image of God in our siblings.

Lord, Have Mercy.

The People: We lament.

Bishop: We lament that even today, we continue not to hear the cry, the shout, of those telling us of the systemic and individual evils of racism.

Lord, Have Mercy.

The People: We lament.

Bishop: Lamentations can be empty if not followed by action. We can easily stay silent about things that matter, stewing in our own guilt or patting ourselves on the back for awareness, without any real action. Our God calls us not only to confess our sins and lament what our forebears did, but to move towards the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. Please join me in prayer as we ask God to move us towards action.

God, We did not create systemic injustice or older structures of the Annual Conference, but we have the responsibility to be part of changing the systems that continue to perpetuate harm. Through the baptismal vows that unite us, remind us that we have the power to resist evil and injustice in whatever forms they present themselves. Help us to root out that which is harmful to you within our own hearts and lives. May we not settle for cheap grace or empty laments that we say with our lips but do not mean with our hearts. Turn us towards action that works for the flourishing of the whole family of God in the beloved community. Make us instruments of reparative and economic justice. Encourage us, give us wisdom and discernment. Light a fire in our hearts. Provide us companions for this work and guide us with the hope that things can and will be better. In your Son, who told us to help usher the ways of your peace here on earth, we pray, Amen.

Bishop: If you or your church have not engaged in the work of anti-racism, let this be the start. We have people in our denomination and within our conference who are working towards building the beloved community and working to unlearn those things which brought harm. If you'd like to take next steps in this work, please email NextStep@tnumc.org so that you can be connected with them.