

# Stand in Solidarity With Us:

## Wear Black on Sunday, December 14, 2014

### Updated Message:

We encourage CME churches to take a photo of the congregation in black on Sunday, December 14 and post the picture to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with the **#BlackLivesMatter** as the title along with the name and location of the church. We want to make this a public witness of our commitment.

Dear Members of The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church:

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus!

We are at a moment of critical crisis in our nation. It is not a moment to be underestimated.

The ways we have witnessed and endured the losses of Trayvon Martin in Florida at the hands of a vigilante, of Michael Brown in Missouri at the hands of a police officer, of 12-year-old Tamir Rice in Ohio at the hands of a police officer, and of Eric Garner in New York who could not breathe through his "choke hold" – and the harboring subsequent questions of justice (or *injustice*) in the facts surrounding their deaths and in the aftermaths of indictments and/or trials (or lack thereof) – all testify to the mounting crises of unanswered injustices toward Black persons in America. We have witnessed these things; they are in our collective consciousness; and we dare not think that they pass through our consciousness without traumatizing us.

This is not a time for the Church to be silent.

In joint conversation with Senior Bishop John Bryant of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and Senior Bishop George E. Battle, Sr., of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and in subsequent conversations with Bishops of other denominations, we have agreed to ask the members of our respective denominations to wear black on Sunday, December 14, 2014, in solidarity with the message that "Black Life Matters." Moreover, we are asking pastors on that Sunday to have special prayer at our altars, asking God's presence and protection over the lives of our Black men. We encourage CME churches to take a photo of the congregation in black on Sunday, December 14 and post the picture to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with the **#BlackLivesMatter** as the title along with the name and location of the church. We want to make this a public witness of our commitment.

**Update:** We have been joined by Dr. Teresa Fry Brown of Candler School of Theology; Bishop George Ellis (Pentecostal Assemblies of the World), Bishop J. Delano Ellis (Joint College of Pentecostal Bishops), Dr. Cynthia L. Hale (Ray of Hope Christian Church); Rev. Carlos Malave (Christian Churches Together), Bishop Paul Morton (Full Gospel Baptist); Dr. Sam Rodriguez (National Hispanic Evangelical Association); and President Samuel Tolbert (National Baptist Convention of America); and others are still being added.

This action is symbolic. More is being done and more needs to be done.

More than 100 years ago, first to the Pan-African Conference in London and then in *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK*, W. E. B. DuBois said, "... the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of [the] color line." How prophetic that statement was for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and yet, how tragic it is in 2014 that the statement *remains true* in this second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century! Racism is still very much alive, very much entrenched, and is indeed *systemic* in America's machinations.

As your Senior Bishop, I publicly applaud the participation by many of our clergy and laity who have stood in solidarity with and ministered to the overwhelmed community of Ferguson, Missouri, and who have joined the march to the State Capitol in Jefferson City. Their actions in solidarity with Ferguson's community are in line with the salvation history that *is liberation* history, evident in the instances of God's prophetic calls when God's people were in distress. Moses heard God say, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them ..." (Exodus 3:7-8a, KJV). The prophet Isaiah heard a voice saying, "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3, NIV). Even so, in the wilderness of 21<sup>st</sup> Century America, God still calls and uses prophets (with credentials and without credentials) to stand on the lines of injustice – even in controversial times and places – and to say, amidst the injustices and oppressions of our desert places, that God is not pleased and we as God's people will not be silent.

Join us, please, in this immediate step of symbolizing our solidarity by wearing black on Sunday, December 14, 2014 – saying to this nation and the world, "Black Life Matters." Symbols have power.

Sincerely,

Senior Bishop Lawrence Reddick