



THE RIGHT REVEREND J. NEIL ALEXANDER, Th.D., D.D.  
VICE PRESIDENT AND DEAN

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Grace to you and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord!

The atrocities of recent days are hard to bear. The pain, the anger, the grief, and the frustration are real. The disbelief and disorientation generate fear. The vacillation between deep sadness and unrepressed rage is its own sort of spiritual and emotional trauma. At moments it is hard to breathe.

George Floyd. Ahmaud Arbery. Breonna Taylor.

Remembering their names is essential. We cannot forget their names.

It is unfortunate that the agonies of these days have come upon us after nearly three months of dealing with a lethal pandemic that has cost more than a hundred thousand lives in this country alone and left untold destruction in its wake. We're exhausted, strung out, anxious, afraid, and more of us are sick than we probably know. How easy it would be to take refuge in the very real challenges of Covid-19 and turn our faces away from the truth about the disease of racism. It is every bit as virulent, every bit as destructive, every bit as lethal; it robs, it destroys, it deprives, it kills—every day.

The Episcopal Church was unwittingly thrust into the middle of things when the President showed up for a politically-motivated photo shoot in front of St. John's Lafayette Square. It was a blasphemous gesture and the police action that provided for it is a national embarrassment. The Rector and People of St. John's have been faithful examples of grace under pressure. The Bishop of Washington has been passionate, honorable, and her words profoundly healing. The Presiding Bishop, with customary clarity, has given powerful testimony to the ultimate triumph of the Way of Love—love of God and love of neighbor. More important has been the loud and vigorous response of people of faith—all faiths—across the nation and around the world, demanding justice for all. The episode in Washington was shameful. The deaths of Floyd, Arbery, and Taylor bear no excuses. None of this should ever have happened, but the unrestrained response of faithful people is reason for hope.

That same unrestrained energy needs now to go into redoubled efforts to heal the disease of racism in all its forms. Healing must take place in families, in churches and schools, institutions, in law and government; no arena of human interaction is exempt. All healing, however, starts in the heart and mind of each individual. Personal conversion to overcoming the sin of racism is the first step toward any progress as a faith community or as a nation. In order to overcome racism, ***we have to want something we have never seen***, and we have to want it to the core of our being, heart and soul. *Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen* (Hebrews 11.1).

It is in that spirit, God being our helper, that we commit the School of Theology to being a place of study, conversation, prayer, repentance, and reconciliation toward healing the sin of racism.

To God alone be the glory!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Neil Alexander".

J. Neil Alexander, Vice President and Dean

together with James F. Turrell, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
Deborah M. Jackson, Associate Dean for Community Life  
Sheri D. Kling, Associate Dean and Executive Director of the Beecken Center