

“Condemning Violence Against Blacks (African-Americans) and Calling for Increased Oversight and Accountability of Law Enforcement”

**A Resolution Recommended by the Church Council to the
Members of Eden United Church of Christ, Hayward, CA
For Consideration and Action at the 155th Annual Meeting
Sunday, June 28, 2020**

Summary

This resolution is a response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and numerous other incidents of police brutality and violence against Blacks (African Americans) that have occurred in the United States in recent months, which are grounded in our nation’s four-hundred year history of racism.

Eden United Church of Christ condemns police brutality and the misuse of law enforcement authority directed against all people, especially people of color, and the racist attitudes and actions that result in violence, especially murder.

This resolution calls for increased oversight and accountability of law enforcement officers and organizations, including their recruitment, hiring, training, review, disciplinary, and improvement practices.

This resolution also calls on law enforcement agencies to recruit, hire, and maintain a police force that is reflective of the racial and cultural demographics of the population they are called to serve and protect.

In addition, this resolution calls for the establishment of a citizen review of officer misconduct and citizen complaints, and the disciplining, tracking, and publishing of law enforcement officers’ offenses through the establishment and integration of a nationwide database system.

Finally, this resolution calls for a revision of local, state, and federal laws that insulate law enforcement officers from criminal and civil liability for their actions.

Biblical, Theological, & Ethical Rationale

As people of faith, we draw ethical guidance from the Judeo-Christian Scriptures and the theological traditions we have received from our forebears. Foundational to our faith is God’s pronouncement, as described in Genesis, that **all** human life, formed by God’s hands and breath and reflecting God’s image, is **good** (*tov*), meaning whole, worthy of

respect, dignity, and stewardship. We also affirm God's covenant with all people, and God's guidance that human beings should form covenants with each other in order to seek peace with justice for all (*shalom*).

As Christians, we follow the teachings and example of Jesus Christ, who brings justice, reconciliation, and peace to all creation and who asks us to witness to his work and word by loving God and our neighbors.

Loving our neighbors is best expressed through acts of solidarity and friendship with **all** people, especially those who are disparaged or marginalized by society. As a collective body, Christian churches such as Eden UCC are empowered to a life of justice and peace-seeking by the Holy Spirit, which functions within history to bring justice, equity, and peace to all people.

In its 155-year history, Eden United Church of Christ (Eden UCC) has stood with many people who have been disparaged by the White majority and suffered the injustices of our political and economic systems. During World War II, Eden UCC leaders allied themselves with Japanese-Americans who were interred by the federal government, and accompanied survivors through their recovery processes. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Eden Church leaders marched in Selma, traveled with Freedom Riders throughout the Deep South, and challenged racially and religiously restrictive housing covenants in Unincorporated South Alameda County. From the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s, Eden UCC members advocated for the rights of farm workers and participated in the grape boycotts which led to the passage of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975. More recently, Eden UCC has stood in solidarity with economic migrants and asylum-seekers, and engaged in a multi-faceted effort to promote immigration policy reform and equitable treatment and access to education, employment, and social services for newcomers in our nation.

We draw inspiration from the wider United Church of Christ, which gathers bi-annually as the General Synod, and which has repeatedly called on our denominational bodies and members to heed the voices of marginalized people, engage in earnest self-reflection and confession about the racism we have learned from our society, and amend our ways, so that all people may enjoy their God-given rights and freedoms in our nation. We act today because our faith compels us to take this stand.

Text of the Motion

Eden United Church of Christ calls upon local, state, and federal officials to:

1. Acknowledge that racist attitudes and beliefs of law enforcement, as well as systemic racism, are resulting in racial profiling and the use of excessive force against African Americans and people of color and causing unnecessary physical harm, including loss of life.
2. Make more stringent the screening of law enforcement for racist attitudes, behaviors, backgrounds, as well as patterns of violence, erratic behavior, and excessive force.
3. Provide additional training for law enforcement in appropriate techniques for detaining persons; arresting and transporting suspects; de-escalating interpersonal conflicts, and maintaining peace at public demonstrations and assemblies.
4. Establish Citizen Review Boards for each law enforcement agency. The Boards should be composed of members of the general public who reflect the demographics of their jurisdiction who are not direct family members of officers or personnel of the agency. The Boards should accept external complaints, review facts and evidence, and discipline officers accused of abusing the authority entrusted to them or engaging in excessive force.
5. Create a national database to track and disseminate information about officers who have been accused of and/or disciplined for the abuse of their authority and/or the use of excessive force, for the purpose of disqualifying law enforcement officers with previous misconduct records from working on the force.
6. Revise those state and federal laws or legal practices that shield law enforcement officers from criminal and civil liability for their actions so that law enforcement officers are no longer afforded immunity from their actions.
7. Urge local, state, and federal officials to re-evaluate the funding of law enforcement to focus more on prevention of crime and the provision of social services than on detention and incarceration.

Funding

No additional funding from Eden Church is anticipated. Cooperative efforts with other churches or interfaith organizations to advocate for these changes is anticipated.

Implementation

Members, friends, and staff of Eden Church will implement the resolution with guidance from the Church Council and the Ministers.