



## Update on North Church and Black Lives Matter

Oct. 4, 2020

North has a long and proud heritage of racial equality. Building on that tradition, we have been responding to the Black Lives Matter movement. Our response has reflected our core values that are encapsulated in three words: inclusive, inspired, and involved. Beginning this summer there are four things we have done:

**First, hospitality:** We have shown hospitality to Indy Ten Black Lives Matter and to the Ten Point Coalition to use our outdoor space as a gathering place. I have offered blessings for those organizations, and I and other members have participated in public demonstrations.

**Second, inclusion:** Under the leadership of one of our co-lay leaders, Alan Archibald, we have started a reflection and an evaluation process of our leadership development to ensure that our practice of having diverse leaders continues. Under Mark Gilgallon's leadership we are scheduling diversified special musicians to enhance our worship. I will be scheduling guest speakers from diverse backgrounds to periodically preach, such as Dr. Leah Gunning Francis, dean of the faculty at Christian Theological Seminary, on Nov. 8.

**Third, study:** Over the years North has engaged in various studies and conversations on the issue of racism, and this summer has been no exception. This summer United Methodist Women studied the book "So You Want to Talk about Race?" Currently North members are participating in the Central District's book discussion on "How to Be an Antiracist." Our Justice and Advocacy team has and will be offering forums on subjects related to race relations: "Public Safety and Police Reform" took place on Oct. 8, and on Dec. 1 the topic will be "Women in Prison in Indiana." In January our Justice and Advocacy team will sponsor a congregational conversation of best resources and practices on combatting racism.

**Fourth, action:** It's not enough to talk – you've got to put words into action. This summer we've expressed that black lives truly matter by registering voters, updating voters' information and distributing voting information at our Farmers Market and at Bread and Bowl. We are distributing early voting information in the surrounding neighborhoods and offering to give neighbors rides to early voting sites and on Election Day. The vast majority of folks we are assisting are low-income African Americans and African emigrants who have historically been discriminated against at the poles and currently have been subject to recent tactics of voter suppression. When we at North say "Black Lives Matter," it means that we are assisting our Black neighbors to participate in the democratic process.

Black lives matter to God and to us.

Pastor Darren