

Handout #5
On Behalf of our Children
Wisconsin Council of Churches

A LITANY AGAINST RACISM

Posted by Bishop Adam Richardson Jr. (African Methodist Episcopal Church) on September 04, 2015

The following litany was offered by Bishop Adam Richardson Jr. of the African Methodist Episcopal Church during a Sept. 2 Pan Methodist worship service at St. John's Church, an historic Episcopal Church on Lafayette Square across from the White House in Washington, D.C. After several hundred years of separation, members of six Pan-Methodist denominations have committed to ministry together. The affirmation establishes a new relationship among the African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, African Union Methodist Protestant, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Union American Methodist Episcopal and United Methodist denominations. The historic black denominations urged churches to celebrate this coming Sunday, Sept. 6, as a Sunday of "Confession, Repentance & Commitment to End Racism."

One: "Prayers can't be answered unless they are prayed," so the poet reminds us and so we have honored the dead in vigils of remembrance, emotional prayers, heartfelt tributes, scripture-based homilies, fervent eulogies, thoughtful soliloquies and appropriate words spoken by public officials, but something must follow the prayer meeting: ACTION!

All: Vigilance follows the vigil!

One: "Tragedies are commonplace," so writes the composer, and the choirs sing and following the tragedies vigils were called in Newtown, Aurora, New York, Sanford, Jacksonville, North Charleston, Charleston, St. Louis, Ferguson, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Charlotte, Cincinnati, Atlanta, Washington, Houston, and Roanoke, and in sympathizing cities, villages and hamlets around the world for the senseless deaths of mostly young victims — unarmed. That is why something must follow the prayer meeting: ACTION!

All: Vigilance follows the vigil!

One: "Shall we pray?" some sincere soul will rhetorically ask for very good reasons. Prayer centers the spirit, calms the mind, sharpens the thought, makes the vision keen, quickens the will, and throws a laser beam on a problem. At the end of the Vigil when the Amen has been said and sung, something must follow the prayer meeting: Action!

All: Vigilance follows the vigil!

One: "Pray as if everything depended on God; act as if everything depended on us," so says the thoughtful theologian. It is putting feet to our faith, power to our prayers, urgency to the present concern, momentum to the Movement. "I received no answer," says Frederick Douglass, "until I prayed with my legs." Something must follow the prayer meeting: Action!

All: Vigilance follows the vigil!

One: Vigil is the starting place, not only to feel God's Grace, but to do God's will, taking action against injustice. The sequence begins in theological reflection, the upward glance, deference to the Creator; marching orders for a parade route out of bondage to a Promised Land. Next steps include consensus building for political, social, economic solutions. Something must follow the prayer meeting: Action!

All: Vigilance follows the vigil!

One: After the vigil, vigilance, to be daily examples of love, peace, faith, hope, maturity, responsibility, and excellence, so that succeeding generations will be motivated to become what they see in us — after we have prayed, not merely inspired by what we say. Something follows must follow the prayer meeting: Action!

All: Vigilance follows the vigil!

One: After the vigil, vigilance, for legislative cures, legal remedies, exercising the franchise to vote in every election, to hold lawmakers and public officials accountable. Something must follow the prayer meeting: Action!

All: Vigilance follows the vigil!

One: After the vigil, vigilance, against racism. Race is unavoidable; racism is a decision and optional. Hate is a horrible heritage; injustice is a terrible legacy, intolerance is a hindrance to freedom; indifference is the precursor to decay, apathy is the door to destruction; hopelessness is a path to collective misery.

All: Prophetic ministry beckons us again to the press, to the polls, to the precincts, to the markets, to the school boards, to the statehouse, to the Capitol, to the White House to express our pain, to have our voices heard, our ideas considered and our demands met. Vigilance follows the vigil!