

# DEAR FAMILY

To the Coastline Church family:

I write to you today with grief in my heart. Coastline Church recognizes that the killing of black people must stop. This crisis has survived too long because of systemic racism and injustice found not only in many hearts, but found in our law, our practices, and in economic and political functions of our society; and it has horrifically been found in the church at times too. Like many in our church, I have wanted to respond with my heart, and I have also wanted to respond with wisdom knowing that our response as a church can help lead and pave a way forward. We do not have all the answers, we are learning and opening ourselves up with you, and we are committed to being a part of the solution, and some of those actions are outlined in page 2 of this letter. However, before a solution can be found we must recognize the problem in our own hearts and own up to it, and with all sincerity we must apologize. I would like to remind you that at the foundation of the Christian faith is indeed the practice of repentance. On behalf of all of Coastline Church, I want to apologize to the black community for the ways we have in fact forgotten, dismissed, and have not actively sought in the past to be part of the solution to a problem that existed just as much on the day we opened Coastline Church, as it does today.

With honesty and fierce conviction, I personally invite you to open your eyes with me to see the work we have ahead of us as a church. We see it as a positive that as a new church in Seattle we can inscribe in our beginnings the need to address these problems. As a staff we will be participating in workshops, and educating ourselves through the Christian Community Development Association for ongoing training around anti-racism and unconscious bias for our staff, and to create spaces for our church community to have ongoing conversations for growth and change. I invite you to join me in leading Coastline Church to fight for racial justice. This is just the beginning for us at Coastline Church.



**KEEP READING BELOW**

# NEXT STEPS

## **1) We are going to listen**

In humility, we submit to hear people's personal experiences with systemic racism and injustice, and acknowledge their experience.

## **2) We are going to act**

Coastline Church has always been about helping others find their redemptive purpose, and equipping you for the faith journey ahead. Stepping up to fight for racial justice can be part of your redemptive purpose, and we have spiritual practices beginning this coming Sunday that we want to equip you with to help you on this journey.

Practice 1 - Prayer Guides that direct you to know how to pray, what to pray for, and how to take on the needed perspectives to make your heart available to the needs of our black neighbors. *These guides will be available every Sunday online and at our Communion Table when we meet again in our physical space.*

Practice 2 - Reading materials to assist you as you learn on this journey. We have a number of recommendations, and they are free to you. See our form online to request these materials. [coastlinechurchnw.com/prayer](http://coastlinechurchnw.com/prayer)

## **3) We are going to be generous**

One of our many values as a church is generosity. It is not only an act of worship, obedience, but also a healthy spiritual practice. Generosity continues to be one of the ways we Seek the Welfare of the City of Seattle. Therefore, we are committing \$5000 in 2020 to the [Equal Justice Initiative](#), [Christian Community Development Association](#), and [Community Passageways](#) in Seattle. If you would like to give above and beyond your normal tithe to one of these organizations, simply select one these funds in our Giving portal.

## **4) We are going to keep praying**

The Holy Spirit is listening. God will fight for us and give you the energy to fight, and through scripture, you will find the perspective of what it means to change your heart to love your neighbor.

**KEEP READING BELOW**

# BE WELL

Every new initiative, including new churches like Coastline Church, have supporting partners. For us, these partners are not only financial investors, but they also give us a theological backbone and rich history to draw from.

Our main partner at Coastline Church is the Free Methodist Denomination. As I was considering the crisis at hand I was reminded how we as a church were grounded in a good family to lean on in the Free Methodist Denomination concerning racial injustice. In the handbook for theology and practice provided by the denomination it says:

"The Free Methodist Church was itself born out of a desire to stand against the evil of slavery and we continue to recognize the sin of racism and oppose it in all its forms. We do so with the following convictions:...Because systemic racism – the way in which human institutions or structures can both actively and passively preserve patterns of discrimination and exclusion – is less perceptible, but no less harmful than overt, individual racist acts, we commit, not just to avoid or sanction individual prejudicial attitudes and actions, but seek to redeem processes, systems and institutions that continue to perpetuate injustice on the basis of race or ethnicity."

So my friends, we are built to respond to this. This is just the beginning. We are called to this, and we certainly will rise to the occasion in this season and come alongside our black neighbors in the name of Jesus. If you are struggling today with your own approach, or if you have in any way felt guilty, inadequate, or overwhelmed by the opinions and criticisms of others and/or the injustices you perhaps have committed...please take a deep breath, and know that you are forgiven. You also should forgive yourself. I too have felt guilty and needed God's forgiveness, and my own. Jesus said He came to make all things new, and this is part of that making.

Grace & Peace to you today,

**Brice Sanders, Lead Pastor**



***Written with and in support of the Coastline Church Board of Administration***