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A Statement to Presbyterians and Others: Our Souls are disturbed! Our Spirits are shaken! Yet, we do not lose faith! Presbyterians in the Mid-Atlantic Region are being called to speak out against Hatred, Injustice and Racism of all kind, particularly that which was demonstrated in Charlottesville, VA, Saturday, August 12, 2017. This region (Synod of the Mid-Atlantic) is the largest number of Presbyterians (U.S.A.) in the denomination. Can we use this collective presence for a forceful and visible voice for justice, equality and unity in the midst of Hatred?

White supremacists and neo-Nazis marched around the city chanting racist epithets. We saw visible symbols and activities, which at one point in history, were conducted in the shadows of the night. We heard the voices of young white men yelling racist words. We saw those carrying torches, Confederate flags and displaying Nazi symbols. One of God's children was killed resulting from a car ramming the crowd. Two State Troopers died in a helicopter crash responding to the disturbance.

These activities are an affront to this nation. Governor Terry McAuliffe responded forcefully to this matter and so did the Mayor of Charlottesville in their denouncement. It is clear that the President of the United States has chosen not to denounce these activities. Further, it is an affront to Presbyterians alike. I believe that through the eloquent and poignant words of Teaching Elder Robina Marie Winbush, who wrote Day 4 in the 30 Days with the Belhar Confession, we can see our charge for the days ahead. She wrote, **"In so many places throughout the world, humanity finds ways to divide along race, class, caste, ethnicity and other humanly created boundaries. We use these boundaries to create social structures that are committed to maintaining systems of division and hostility. "In both the United States and South Africa these structures were undergirded by theologies developed by "Christian" theologians who argued that it was God's intention that humanity be separated, particularly along racial lines and that white supremacy was divinely ordered. The Confession of Belhar denounces such theology as heresy and reminds us that God gave us the gift of unity, even though this unity is often distorted by human brokenness. Therefore, we are called to work for the full realization of this gift. However, unity is not a passive acceptance of unjust systems for the sake of a false peace. It is the hard work of dismantling the systems that divide and subjugate sisters and brothers and building societies marked by justice and love. We live between the promise of the reign of God in Jesus the Christ and the fulfillment of that reality on earth is it is in heaven."**

Some Challenges for Presbyterians include, but are not limited to the following:

- That Teaching/Ruling Elders and members take serious this gift of Unity and work judiciously to denounce racism, white supremacy and the evil acts of all hate groups.
- That Presbyteries assist its leadership and congregations to engage in the substantive work of Race and Reconciliation.
- That Presbyterians recommit themselves to ecumenical and interfaith work.
- That Presbyterians join in advocating for legislative policies that guard against such hatred and provide protection for those the hatred is targeting.
- That Presbyterians work for Peace and Unity in the places that you live and have influence.
- That Presbyterians Pray without ceasing!

In God's Grace,
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