



## Prairie to Pine Regional Council

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### **Black Lives Matter. Indigenous Lives Matter. Committing to racial justice matters.**

Prairie to Pine Regional Council affirms that Black Lives Matter. We condemn the systemic, racist violence, in Canada as in the US, that disproportionately affects people of colour and in particular Black people.

As a Regional Council we recognize our own systemic racism, and we need to begin and recommit to the work of decolonizing our structures. We must seek to do the hard work of introspection, and recognize the white privilege and supremacy that have shaped our denomination, including our communities of faith. This is not an easy truth to absorb. Yet the enormous, daily impact of racism should leave us with no choice but to address it directly.

Your Executive and staff team will be discussing what actions can be taken, in keeping with deep concerns about anti-Black racism in our contexts, and with earlier commitments to intercultural ministry, including racial justice. Your ideas for challenging racism are also needed. All ideas are welcome, and we especially invite racialized and Indigenous people to be in conversation with each other and with the Regional Council. Please be in touch with Executive Minister Shannon McCarthy with your thoughts: [smccarthy@united-church.ca](mailto:smccarthy@united-church.ca)

As a place to begin or continue in this moment, we want to offer spaces and resources for different groups to have necessary and sometimes hard conversations, and to find support. To start (or continue) this work, the Regional Council is offering a [short list of recommended reading or viewing](#) and is offering funds to help cover the cost. We ask you to commit to reading or viewing one of these over the summer. If you want to set up an online group to read in community, we will help you. If there are titles in other languages that should be included, please tell your Regional Council office.

### **In this moment, we also ask you to read, reflect on, and share four voices:**

- A [joint letter from the United, Anglican, and Lutheran churches](#).
- A personal reflection from Rev Michael Blair, Executive Minister, Church in Mission/L'Église en Mission (please see the next page).
- A call from Adele Halliday, Team Leader Discipleship & Witness, who is known to many of us through her years of intercultural ministry and visits to our Region: [What I Need from White People](#).
- [An invitation from Rev Paul Walfall](#), who serves Fort Saskatchewan Pastoral Charge in Northern Spirit Regional Council.

Addressing racism and racial justice has been and will be an ongoing conversation and journey for our Regional Council and all our ministries. We will do so imperfectly, and we will make mistakes as we take risks. We also know that in our community we have many leaders, teachers, stories, and communities who can guide us. We have our faith to guide us. May we choose to listen and act together.

*- Rev Kwang Beom Cho and Lori Stewart: co-chairs, Prairie to Pine Regional Council*

*Rev Michael Blair, 31 May 2020:*

“Friends, I have been wrestling about what to say about the events of this past week, but not only this week - the violence that has shaken many of us to the core. There is a desire to know what to do, how to respond. Grateful for many who have reached out to see how I am doing. It’s appreciated.

Yet, I need you to know that George Floyd's cry: "I can't breathe," is a daily reality for many of us black folks. It is important, yes to be angry at the physical violence of a knee to the neck. And know that your silence at the systemic and unending racism that black folks experience daily, is in itself a act of the knee to the neck...

I can't breathe, when you leave it to me to name the racism that is in your face yet you keep silent...

When you take the system as a given, and don't question assumptions or the way things are, and are silent...you leave me gasping and fighting for air...

I can't breathe when you want me to represent and you do not ask why there are so few people like me around...and you keep silent

I can't breathe when you dismiss me, by not seeing colour...your silence is a knee to the neck

I can't breathe when you see pictures of the institutions you are a part of that only show white people...and you stay silent and don't ask why...

I can't breathe when you tell me we all have red blood, and diminish my experience if you are serious about taking steps to name anti-black racism and racial violence (not just the physical) then your starting point is a commitment to stay silent no more...”



**United against Racism**