

Statement of Condemnation
And
Call to Action

We condemn the actions of the Rochester police department that resulted in the death of Daniel T. Prude. We call upon the Rochester Chief of Police, La’Ron D. Singletary to immediately place the officers involved on probation. We demand that New York Attorney General Letitia James act swiftly to conclude her agency’s investigation in order for Mayor Lovely Warren to ensure justice is done. Until these actions are concluded we encourage the Rochester community to manifest peaceful and non-violent outrage over the brutal actions of police officers toward a naked black man suffering with mental illness.

The time for passionate statements has passed. Now is the time for concrete actions.

In 2018 the New York Conference of the United Church of Christ declared itself an “Anti-Racism Conference. In part our resolution stated:

“...that the New York Conference, its Associations, and its local churches affirm its commitment to be an Anti-Racism Conference by engaging in the following active processes:

- 1) Participate in the New & Right Spirit Anti-Racism program so as to better understand the historic and systemic racism of our nation, as well as the deep impact white privilege has had on people of color; and
- 2) Engage in humble and intentional multiracial conversations to better understand the impact of racism and white privilege at the local church level; and
- 3) Conduct a “Racial Diversity Assessment” of our church facilities and examine ways that the overwhelming whiteness of our churches could be barriers to the inclusion and welcome of people of color;
- 4) Identify and eliminate racism within its systems, organizational structures, policies, practices, and attitudes to ensure there are no barriers to inclusivity.”

In direct response to action item #4, we now ask each congregation of the United Church of Christ in New York to contact their local government entity which has a police agency operating with police officers as defined under 1.20 of the criminal procedure law, and call for their action plan required by Governor Cuomo’s June 12th, 2020 Executive Order (*No. 203: New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative*). This executive order requires local governments to consult with faith-based community groups to ensure that a plan is developed and submitted to the New York Director of the Division of the Budget “which shall consider evidence-based policing strategies, including but not limited to, use of force policies, procedural justice; any studies addressing systemic racial bias or racial justice in policing; implicit bias awareness training; de-escalation training and practices; law enforcement assisted diversion programs; restorative justice practices; community-based outreach and conflict resolution; problem-oriented policing;”

no later than April 1, 2021. The Director of the Division of the Budget shall be authorized to condition receipt of future appropriated state or federal funds upon filing of such certification (plan) for which such local government would otherwise be eligible...”

In addition to naming the egregious act of sin through violence, we must also name the sin of silence surrounding mental health issues. Daniel T. Prude was not only a man of color, but also, a man struggling with having a mental health disease. The pervasive silence of our society surrounding mental health awareness has led to a system that is at times impotent in properly working with those who suffer from mental health issues. It is critical that this aspect is lifted up alongside the racial violence of this crime so that we understand that no problem we are facing sits alone. The same way in which we are all connected, so are the evils that attack the fabric of our humanity. We in the New York Conference want to make it clear that the awareness, education, and implementation of specialized training in addressing every human being suffering from mental health concerns is a priority as we seek to heal our broken nation.

Reverend David R Gaewski, Conference Minister
Reverend Shernell Edney Stilley, Associate Conference Minister
Reverend Gary Ferner, Associate Conference Minister
Reverend Ryan Henderson, Associate Conference Minister
Reverend Dr. Marjorie Purnine, Associate Conference Minister
Reverend Dr. Marsha Williams, Associate Conference Minister