In his 1967 book, “Where do we go from Go from Here?,” the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. writes words that some 50 years later would seem written for our time. Calling upon the “fierce urgency of now,” he implores that our society urgently reorder our priorities, “so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war.” These priorities as King outlined represent many of the priorities of The Lehigh Conference of Churches’ work within our community; to treat each person with dignity and respect, and provide hope, housing and wholeness to our community. Dr. King’s call for decent and affordable housing within this book do not go unheeded today; indeed much of our work is around finding people quality affordable housing and working with them through challenges of food insecurity, addictions, disease, and mental health issues.

The killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, was a blatant affront to our work and mission of treating each and every person with human dignity and respect at The Lehigh Conference of Churches.

We urgently condemn his killing and all such unjustified violence, and we acknowledge the legacy of such violence in our society, especially upon African American males.

We proclaim “Black Lives Matter,” understanding that we have lived far too long in a society and as individuals when black, brown and red lives appear to have not mattered as much as white lives.

**We urgently call upon communities of faith, law enforcement agencies and our greater society to address legacies of institutional racism that continue to plague our nation.**

**And as urgently we call upon all members of our nation to actively work together to learn more about institutional racism, taking the hard journey of reexamining ourselves and our own actions.**

Finally, as a Conference of Churches with many member churches and other supportive religious bodies sharing diverse theological positions, we affirm our unity as seen in our mission statement: “Putting our faith into action, we minister to and advocate for those in need and encourage all to reach their full potential.” Our calling is to live the words of Jesus in actions of justice, love and compassion for all members of the human family, our brothers and sisters.

We condemn any reaction of violence to the largely peaceful protests of George Floyd’s killing. Locally, we are grateful for the actions of the Allentown Police Chief Glenn Granitz and others in our area who have recognized the need and right to protest peacefully. We applaud the ways Granitz views policing as a partnership with our communities, saying “With everyone working together, we want to be a place where people can peacefully protest” (June 3, 2020, lehighvalleylive.com).
The Lehigh Conference of Churches realizes that our work, whether in affordable housing, assistance to those facing mental illness or food insecurity, must be performed seeking justice and love. At our best, we are challenging both the structure that has created injustice in our society and doing so in love. Justice and love must go hand in hand if our Christian faith is to be put in action. In the season after Pentecost, as the Spirit was given to a small and fledgling church, we again call upon the Spirit to unite us to work for love, justice, and peace—in our own lives, within the work of The Lehigh Conference of Churches, and within the greater structure of the United States of America.

We invite members of our community to join us in an upcoming book discussion “White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo,” provided through the efforts of the Lehigh Conference of Churches’ Interfaith Action Committee.

Host: Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates, co-chair of the Interfaith Action Committee, Conference Minister of the Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Gathering via Zoom: June 23, July 7, July 21, August 4 at 6:30 pm

RSVP to: Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates at bonnieb@pnec.org

A Zoom link will be sent to participants.