

December 10, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today as we pen this letter, the Christian Church is fully in the season of Advent, the season on the calendar of the Church that observes and celebrates the birth of our Lord and the coming of the Christ child into the world and into our lives.

Christmas is often referred to as “the happiest time of the year” and is a season filled with song, laughter, family, friends, food and gifts; to be sure, everything feels better at Christmas time.

And yet even in the midst of that reality we are also called to remember that the first Christmas while indeed a time for rejoicing for the gift given to us, was also a time of great sorrow.

We are told in Scripture that during that first Christmas there was the slaughter of the innocent, the deaths of babies and children two years old and under, a time of lament, weeping and sorrow.

As it was in that first Christmas season, so it is today.

All over our world lives have been lost to the COVID-19 virus, and these losses represent empty seats and aching hearts: over 250,000 lives, over 250,000 graves, over 250,000 losses.

Here in our city, we too mourn the death of one of our own, one of our children, one of our sons.

On Friday, December 4, 2020, Casey Goodson, a young black man, 23 years old, entering his home after picking up a sandwich, was shot and killed in what appears to be a case of mistaken identity at the hands of a Franklin County Sheriff’s Deputy.

While there may be information we do not have or facts we may not be privy to, here is what we do know.

We know a young black man has had his life snatched from him. We know that he was not the suspect being sought. We know that he in NO WAY instigated or provoked the attack that claimed his life. We know that this tragedy must be addressed, and the truth must be made known.

As faith leaders in this city, we mourn the death of this young man and grieve the loss of Casey Goodson. We pray for his family and friends and we stand in solidarity with them in this time of loss.

We also urge a full, free and transparent investigation, and call on our community leaders to implement such an investigation as soon as possible.

May God heal our hearts, comfort us in our grief and steel us for the work of Justice in our Community.

Sincerely in Christ,

Bishop Timothy J. Clarke
First Church of God

Bishop Robert J. Brennan
Diocese of Columbus

Bishop Frank M. Reid
Third Episcopal District A.M.E. Church

Dr. Victor M. Davis
Trinity Baptist Church

Pastor Rich Nathan
Vineyard Church of Columbus

Pastor Michael Young
City of Grace Church

Dr. Keith A. Troy
New Salem Baptist Church

Pastor Ryan Lowery
Dwell Church

Pastor Charles E. Newman
Antioch Baptist Church

Pastor Ed Akers
Victorious Living Church

Pastor Nikki Hampton
Fresh Start Church

Bishop Gregory V. Palmer
United Methodist Church

Prioress Patricia A. Twohill, OP
Dominican Sisters of Peace