Statement from Cincinnati’s Interfaith Community on the Killing of George Floyd

We, the undersigned members of more than 30 faith communities representing 13 world religions, stand united in denouncing the unconscionable killing of George Floyd by officers of the Minneapolis Police Department and the on-going systemic racism that corrupts justice in our country. Our prayers go out to the family of Mr. Floyd and to Minneapolis city officials our plea is that they bring the one officer to justice and continue to investigate the legal culpability of the others. While we affirm the right of protest and resonate with the public’s outcry, we deplore violence and vandalism as means of expression.

Too many African American men and women have lost their lives due to police brutality. The persistence of this injustice in spite of numerous police reforms reveals that we have much work yet to do to root out the institutional racism deeply ingrained in not only the law enforcement establishment but in all areas of society.

Our community of Cincinnati has had its own history of police mistreatment of African Americans, but to its credit the Cincinnati Police Department has owned its accountability and adopted practices and policies to lessen the potential for the use of excessive force. Prompted by civil unrest in the aftermath of a 2001 police shooting and a subsequent lawsuit that resulted in the historic Collaborative Agreement, CPD’s police-community reforms have become the model for other communities. Yet, we, too, must remain ever vigilant.

We need to stop paying lip service and honestly address the societal problems caused by our racial inequities, evidenced recently by the disparities in the infection rate of COVID-19. We must commit ourselves to eradicating systemic inequities and doing more to close the social distance gap that still exists between our racial, religious and ethnic groups. Our community’s minorities continue to be victimized by bigotry and hate.

EquaSion is a nonpartisan civic association whose mission statement reads: Compassion through Action: Acting on our compassion, we engage people of all faiths to discover their shared humanity and spirituality, and to work together for an equitable and just community for all.

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All of our religious traditions, without exception, have tenets that call for their believers to behave toward their fellow human beings with compassion, respect and justice, and to treat every person with dignity. Accordingly, our religious convictions require us to speak out against injustice whenever and wherever it occurs. We have done so before; we do so now; and we will continue to do so.

As spiritual leaders, we share the belief that one can only remove evil with good and can only remove hate with love. We, therefore, call upon all persons of goodwill to a greater degree of personal accountability and engagement. Let us be accountable to and for one another, and let us become more engaged in working together for the dignity and well-being of all of our neighbors. In short, let us come together as a caring community should! Thank you.

For EquaSion and the Cincinnati Festival of Faiths,

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