

WE PRAY, WE PROTEST, WE EVEN FIGHT AND DIE FOR JUSTICE, BUT WE DO NOT RIOT
(Reverend Frank Bostic)

June 9, 2020

Dear Pilgrim Family and Friends:

I write to you with the emotions of grief and sadness, pleading for grace and mercy from Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are faced with one of the most difficult times in the history of our nation and certainly in the lives of black people across this country. The growing threat to our basic human rights and equal justice has been shaken, as we watched Brother George Floyd take his last breath at the hands of the very police who are sworn to protect and serve our communities; notwithstanding, a world pandemic that has brought this country to a freeze, a pause, a standstill causing social distancing for people who gather with hugs and kisses changing what we know as normality. The Coronavirus, or what we have come to know as COVID-19, has not only been a worldwide pandemic, but a pandemic of epic proportions in our black communities, with infection rates four to five times that of any other ethnicity and death rates three times higher than any other race, completely ravaging black communities across this nation.

As I ponder my role, as a servant of God and the Pastor of this church, on how to respond to the recent events, I immediately turned to prayer to provide for me a clearer direction in moving forward as a leader in this community and certainly this church.

I wanted to make absolutely certain that I followed my faith. So, as I begin to formulate my thoughts on how to lead us through this crisis, it is my prayer that God will guide me and unite us toward real action and solutions.

Please be mindful that last year, in 2019, over 1,000 people were killed by police across this nation. African Americans were disproportionately among those deaths. And, Black people accounted for 24 percent of those killed, despite making up only about 13 percent of the population. What is even more disturbing is that African Americans accounted for 52.5 percent of all homicide offenders from 1980 to 2008. The offending rates for blacks was almost eight times higher than any other ethnicity. Most homicides were intra-racial with 93 percent of African American victims killed at the hands of other African Americans (Brothers). According to this week's headline that appeared in the DailyMail, Chicago experienced its most violent day since 1960 as 18 people were gunned down in 24 hours (May 31-June1) during unrest sparked after the tragic death of George Floyd. I am also incredibly disturbed that here in Buffalo, three African American males lost their lives to the devastating gun violence that has plagued this city and our country for far too long.

As the father of five black boys, who are young adults and consistent in age to the men and women who have been murdered, it has burdened me to act expeditiously in being proactive instead of reactive that I partner with God and other leaders to seek what God would have us to do in creating a plan that would serve to assist my state, local and national Baptist convention leaders. It is my prayer that my efforts would be pleasing in the sight of God, that grace and mercy would abound even more. I have therefore been moved and compelled to lead

accordingly to God's word which instructs: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in this time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Please join me Saturday, June 13, 2020, as we gather at 12:30pm (Rain or Shine), When Millennials Pray (WMP) will open us up with praise and worship at Pilgrim Baptist Church, 665 Michigan Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14203 (Parking lot adjacent to the Church) in Prayer for Human Rights and Equality, Prayer for Health and Wellness, and Prayer for Solidarity for our leaders and members of our greater community.

In closing, I believe there is no coincidence that Pilgrim sits on hallowed ground, directly at the thoroughway of the underground railroad and the passage that our ancestors took to flee the systematic oppression of racism that existed over 150 years ago and continues today. The fight and the struggle are still the same. The cries of fore fathers and mothers are still the same cries of brutality, injustice, lack of solidarity, and lack of trust of government and one another. I can't think of a better place to start this journey of change. My stewardship is to lead Pilgrim Baptist Church in all things. As the Lord speaks to us Saturday, I know he will guide us toward the true and righteous path for our city, state and national leaders.

If you have any questions, or need special accommodations, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or the Church office at (716) 854-4880. I'm looking forward to seeing and welcoming each of you on Saturday.

Yours in Christ,

Reverend Frank Bostic
Senior Pastor