

RESPONSE TO PROTESTS

I would like to take a somewhat different approach to the ongoing unrest following the death of George Floyd. **ALL LIVES MATTER.** Many recognize that there is systemic injustice in virtually all countries including the United States. If there is a country out there without prejudice or racism I'd like to know how they accomplish this. One of the great facts about our country is that we are a melting pot. People from all corners of the globe have come here to find a better life for themselves and their families. This diversity is a strength, but can at times cause division.

We are born in a particular place to particular parents. Our parents are of a particular ethnicity or a blend of ethnicities. What we have in common is that we are all human beings. The color of our skin, eyes and hair may differ, but inside we are the same. We share the same organs, the same circulatory system, the same digestive system, the same brain. Yes, there are variables, but human beings share the same systems. "God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them." [Genesis 1:27] Scientists try to pinpoint where and when the first humans began. In the end, it doesn't matter because God created them, and it was good. Through time, there were differentiations among human beings. They adapted to their particular climate. Some have fair skin, often in the North. Some have dark skin, often in the south. Asians have a different hue, as do Latinos. There was a common ancestor which adapted through a significant period of time.

What has this to do with current circumstances? Many people are comfortable being around people who look like them. Others appreciate racial diversity. It makes things more interesting. Over thousands of years, stereotypes emerged. These generalities cause a great deal of harm. Some see through them, others believe it. These prejudices can become integrated into a particular culture or class. Our country has fought wars over the equality of all human persons. I grew up during the Civil Rights movement in the 60's. Living in the Northwest corner of the country it was difficult to understand how these inequalities could exist in the land of the free, the home of the brave. Human beings do not always follow God's law of love—Love God and love your neighbor. The parable of the Good Samaritan explains who is our neighbor. Several passed by, but the outsider, the one hated by many because of his origins, took compassion on the wounded man. This was not well received in Jesus' time, when there were many prejudices. These went both ways at times. We still do not seem to get it. Recent events remind us that some of us do not experience the same realities. I have respect for people in law enforcement. The ones I have dealt with are professional and service oriented. Like any profession, some do not live up to the same standards. We need to beware of judging a whole profession on the behavior of a few. We do need to take a look at our system. Where is the accountability? Sometimes 'bad apples' keep coming back to the barrel. Some structure of oversight seems to be a part of the solution. These are complex issues, but hopefully meaningful dialogue can help make all people feel safe. I conclude with the motto, **ALL LIVES MATTER.**