

# COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

## African Methodist Episcopal Church

### Statement RE: Violence in Charlottesville, Virginia

August 12, 2017

The Council of Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church condemns the violence that exploded in Charlottesville, Virginia. The "Unite the Right" march was sponsored by white supremacists, white nationalists, and the Ku Klux Klan to protest the removal of a statue of General Robert E. Lee. It was responded to by counter protestors.

The result was a face-off between the two groups marked with punching, kicking, water bottle hurling, racial taunting and even the deployment of chemical sprays. A car plowed into a group of peaceful protesters killing one woman and injuring about 19 others. The driver, James Alex Fields is being held on charges including second degree-murder. A helicopter monitoring the rally later crashed killing two Virginia State Troopers.

There are those who argue that white nationalists have the right to free speech, and in a democracy, we support their right. But what was on display before the nation yesterday was more than free speech. It was an unruly event designed to intimidate and provoke violence.

In a word, what happened yesterday was a hate crime and domestic terrorism. It was demonic and does not represent what the United States claims it stands for.

We are also disappointed with the response of President Donald Trump. Let us be clear, this is not a partisan issue, this is a matter of failed leadership. President Trump while condemning hatred and violence, claimed it was on "many sides", but it wasn't. This violence was initiated by the white supremacist. We have heard President Trump specifically call out Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Senator Mitch McConnell and come down hard on others, but he did not explicitly condemn white nationalist, supremacist or the Ku Klux Klan. It must be noted that hate crimes have increased since President Trump's campaign and inauguration.

The Council of Bishops calls upon President Trump at a scheduled Monday press availability, to categorically denounce white supremacist, nationalist and the Ku Klux Klan that threatened to divide our nation. The Council wants to make it clear that he does not want or seeks their support. This would help unite and assure the nation that our president embraces all the citizens of the United States.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church reaffirms our opposition to hate crimes, racism and anti-Semitism, and calls upon the nation, particularly our national leadership to condemn racism and hatred.

Hate never wins. It never has and it never will.

Bishop McKinley Young, *Senior Bishop*  
Bishop Clement W. Fugh, *President, Council of Bishops*  
Bishop Frank Madison Reid III, *Ecumenical & Urban Affairs*