

Lamenting the Death of Ahmaud Arbery

A Statement By The Summit Church's Commission for Oneness and Reconciliation (CORE)

On February 23, Ahmaud Arbery, a 25-year-old African American man went jogging in a small town in Georgia. He was chased down in a car by two white men who shot him to death. Most of us heard about Ahmaud's death in early May when a video showing the moment of the shooting was released. In light of that video, and a strong public outcry, Ahmaud's shooters were arrested on May 7.

While this arrest marks a much-needed step on the road to justice, we join the myriad of voices, including many of our own Summit members, who continue to lament Ahmaud's untimely and violent death. A staggering 74 days passed between Ahmaud's death and his killers' arrest. During that time, important evidence was withheld from the grand jury. This inexcusable delay of justice connects to a lengthy history of deprived due process for people of color in our country. As many have asked in recent days, *What if there had been no video?*

No arrest, nor conviction, nor public outcry will restore Ahmaud to his mother. This fact should horrify and unsettle us. And it should move us to continued action.

For citizens of color, this injustice continues a long, tragic history of discrimination, deprivation of due process, and systemic injustice.

If we, the people of God, want to join in the gospel fight against racism, white supremacy, and injustice, our struggle must continue well beyond today.

The fight for racial justice is one God himself began as far back as Genesis 12 when he promised to reunite the ethnically diverse and contentious world through Abraham. It is a fight whose victory is promised in Scripture's final chapters, where we see the multiethnic restoration of all nations, tribes, peoples, and languages (Revelation 7:9–10). Most importantly, it is a fight made possible by the gospel: Racial reconciliation is an inevitable fruit of the gospel of reconciliation.

To grow in reconciliation, however, we must begin where we are. Tragically, injustice toward African Americans has marred nearly every chapter of American history. African Americans were the primary victims of legalized slavery for a staggering 246 years. Even once slavery was made illegal in 1865, other practices reinforced racial inequity. These are just a few: post-Civil War sharecropping kept black farmers intractably indebted to whites; Jim Crow Laws codified segregation, relegating African Americans to substandard schools, housing, restaurants,

and transportation; lynchings led to the deaths of thousands of innocent African Americans and terrorized the entire black community.

And in the year 2020, the life of another young black man has been snuffed out. His name is Ahmaud.

As we grieve Ahmaud's death, we grieve far more than one man. Our hearts echo the lament of the prophet Habakkuk:

O LORD, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not hear?
Or cry to you 'Violence!'
and you will not save?
Why do you make me see iniquity,
and why do you idly look at wrong?
Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.
So the law is paralyzed,
and justice never goes forth.
For the wicked surround the righteous;
so justice goes forth perverted. (Habakkuk 1:2–4 ESV)

The struggle for racial reconciliation did not begin with Ahmaud's death, nor did it end with his killers' arrest. This struggle for racial reconciliation began in God's heart, and it continues in the life of God's people.

We are committed to this struggle, in all of its mess and pain and anger and grief. Today, tomorrow, and until we breathe our last. But we are committed to this struggle with something the world lacks: the hope of Christ.

In Scripture, victory over racial injustice is not merely an aspiration but an assured declaration of God. We work not only for a victory in the future but from the victory of the past, from the blood-stained cross of Calvary, which unites broken sinners to a holy God and to one another.

Until that day, we join with the prophet Amos in saying, "[L]et justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). Lord, make your church a people of justice in an unjust world.

To learn more about the Summit's desire to grow as a multiethnic church, please visit summitchurch.com/core.