

COGIC Presiding Bishop J. Drew Sheard Gives Official Response to Death of Tyre Nichols

Editor's Note: Presiding Bishop J. Drew Sheard and the Church Of God In Christ, with headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee, issued an official statement Jan. 27 regarding the recent death of Tyre Nichols. The full text of the statement is below. Watch the video announcement of the statement at this link.

The Church Of God In Christ grieves with the family of Tyre Nichols, the African American community, the City of Memphis, and all persons affected by the recent, shocking death of Tyre Nichols by five Memphis police officers. We understand the frustration and outrage of citizens at the brutal nature of the death of yet another Black man by those committed to serve and protect. Our heartfelt condolences and prayers go out to his family and friends during this difficult time.

As an organization deeply invested in the City of Memphis, we must challenge responsible parties to correct the wrongs of a broken justice system. We commend Memphis Police Chief CJ Davis for her leadership and the swift response of the department in the termination of officers involved in what she rightfully condemned as "a failing of basic humanity." And we support her 'Reimagine Policing in Memphis' initiative to establish trust between law enforcement and the people they serve as essential to the stability of our communities and the safe and effective delivery of police services. We are also encouraged that appropriate charges were filed against those responsible for this heinous act. Collectively, these actions indicate that the City of Memphis and the District Attorney

are fulfilling their obligation to protect the civil rights of its citizens.

We unequivocally applaud the daily commitment of most police officers and appreciate their willingness to put their lives on the line. However, we cannot ignore that many individuals have experienced unjust targeting, humiliation, loss of physical freedom, physical harm, and even death at the hands of relatively few officers.

Police officers perform a vital and often dangerous job in our communities. While situations may occur where officers must use force, we expect that such force will be used only when legally necessary and as prescribed by law. If deadly force is warranted, the public has a right to a thorough and neutral examination to be conducted, and all parties will be held legally accountable for their actions. These stringent standards ensure the integrity of all investigations into police misconduct.

In response to community concerns, the Church Of God In Christ encourages our constituents to support direct action and peaceful protests resulting in transparency and greater confidence in the criminal justice system. Therefore, we call on all community stakeholders to unite and speak against police misconduct and for systemic changes in the best interests of the entire city of Memphis.

We implore all people of goodwill, elected officials, the faith community, and local leaders to work together to find meaningful solutions to help ensure a just resolution.

When we unify for one of us, we unify for all of us!

We pray that God grants us peace. {eoa}



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