

Why We Must Heed Bishop Blake's Advice on Improving Race Relations

Our nation is horrified by the violence and death that occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia, over the weekend.

My longtime friend Bishop Charles Blake, presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ, issued a statement which we carried on Charisma News today, but I decided to use it as a guest editorial in my Strang Report in order to get the word out. I humbly ask you to share it.

Those of you who followed me in 2012 remember the tragedy that happened with Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, just two miles from my office. While the circumstances were very different, it let me see how deep the racial divide is in our community. But I also saw God work when people of faith stood up and got involved to make a difference. Please heed what Bishop Blake had to say:

Bishop Charles E. Blake: All People of Faith Must Condemn White Supremacy

By Bishop Charles E. Blake

The violence, hatred and white supremacy on display in Charlottesville, Virginia, must be condemned by all people of faith and goodwill. The injuries and death suffered by those supporting an end to the commemoration of the Confederacy are deeply saddening. We also regret any harm to their opponents. Our hearts go out to all who were hurt and we call for an end to the violence.

What transpired in Charlottesville, with a vehicle charging a group of protesters, leaving one dead and 19 injured, is an

act of domestic terrorism. On this point, one must be perfectly clear. Had the driver been identified as an Arab or a Muslim, is there any question that such an act of violence would have been identified as a case of terrorism? Just as white supremacist Dylan Roof's assault on Mother Emmanuel AME Church was an act of domestic terrorism, so too is the incident in Charlottesville. The political goal in both instances was the intimidation of black people and the violent denial of their rights as citizens. But it is essential to note that the black community must oppose terrorism in all its forms, even when it is self-inflicted.

This brings to mind the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.'s challenge to the nation during a period of even more intense racial unrest. Dr. King argued that we as a society must "learn to disagree without being disagreeable." In the Spirit of Jesus and of Dr. King, I call upon my Protestant and Roman Catholic brothers and sisters to come together to exemplify King's vision of the beloved community as a moral witness to the world. There is a particular need for black men to rise to this challenge. We in the church must provide moral leadership to show how we vigorously pursue justice while maintaining a compassionate tone in discourse with those with whom we disagree. {eoa}