

A Statement About the “Black Lives Matter” Sign on the Lawn of First Parish Church in Weston, UU

June 2020

As our country faces the painful consequences of its history of systemic racism recently ignited by the deaths of African Americans by law enforcement, including George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and many others, the Standing Committee of First Parish Church in Weston has unanimously voted to place a “Black Lives Matter” sign on our front lawn as a symbol of solidarity with the black community.

We know there are various meanings and implications of this movement, for which there is not universal agreement. We acknowledge that of course all lives matter, but we also recognize that not all lives have endured a history of systematic exploitation and discrimination. Most of us did not learn African American history in school and are just now fully realizing what has occurred in the past and **what is happening still today.**

We acknowledge that our community and our nation were built upon racism and white supremacy policies. We recognize that racism permeates every single system of our country — our economy, justice system, housing, healthcare, education, transportation, and environmental protections.

Our Actions.

First Parish Church has a long history of working for racial justice. Many of our members have worked diligently to support the work of the [UU Urban Ministry](#) in the Roxbury community, and our members were actively involved in founding the [Roxbury Weston Preschool](#), which continues to be housed in our building. Over 6% of our Church budget is allocated to our Outreach Committee, which supports a number of organizations serving diverse populations. In addition, many of our members continue to support the METCO program in Weston, and we hosted the METCO 50th Anniversary event last year at our church. We have sponsored speakers, forums, and book discussions to educate ourselves on racial justice.

We have not done enough.

The placement of the “Black Lives Matter” sign on our front lawn is intended to declare and represent our **commitment to do more** and **to sustain our work toward racial justice.**

In this time when, once again, the fire of racial injustice has been ignited, we commit to sustaining our intention to actively care and to not go back to a “disassociated normal” that has happened too often in the history of our church and our society.

We commit to the following:

- **Sustained Engagement:** Recommend that the Standing Committee (our board) form and fund a permanent Social Justice Committee that, as part of its overall mission, will be responsible for **annually defining and assessing specific racial justice actions our church plans to take.**
- **Active Participation:** Ask each Social Justice Action Task Force member to define how they plan to work toward racial justice by participating in the work of the **UU Urban Ministry** and/or one of the organizations sponsored by our Outreach Committee and/or taking the lead on an activity sponsored by the Task Force.
- **Ongoing Racial Justice Education:** Sponsor and publicize regular, periodic programs open to the community, including personal stories, book discussions, films, and lectures on the history of and ongoing racism in our society.
- **Assessment:** Assess and report progress on each commitment at our annual meetings and set new commitments for the coming year.

We believe we are all called to work towards that “more perfect union” that our Constitution so elegantly names. Our country’s history is defined in part by separation and exploitation. Our future will hopefully be one of justice, compassion and unity; the “Beloved Community” that Dr. King foresaw and foretold.