



THE MOTHER EMANUEL NINE

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## MOURNING THE MOTHER EMANUEL NINE & RE-COMMITTING TO THE SOCIAL VISION OF OUR CHURCH

*By: The Reverend Jennifer Leath, Ph.D.*

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. <sup>2</sup> He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. <sup>3</sup> In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Grant me justice against my opponent.’ <sup>4</sup> For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, ‘Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.’” <sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” *(Luke 18.1-8)*

Today we are tempted to lose heart as we mourn the heinous murder of nine members of our Zion at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC, including Pastor Clementa C. Pinckney. Instead, we persist in prayer as the widow before the unjust judge.

We pray for the comfort of each of the families who lost loved ones in the hateful shooting on 17 June 2015. We pray that the Mother Emanuel congregation will find refuge, strength, and courage in the heart of God. We pray that God’s justice, peace, and safety will prevail in South Carolina, in the 7th Episcopal District, among those targeted because of the color of their skin, for those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, and in the lives of all who are oppressed. We pray that those who live with mental illness will be healed, exacting no harm to others or themselves. We pray that the hearts and minds of those who live according to delusions of normative racial hierarchies – and especially those who promote white superiority – would be disarmed, dissuaded, and transformed.

In 1821, Denmark Vesey, a founder of the “Bethel Circuit” that would become Mother Emanuel, developed a plan to overthrow individuals and systems that dared to enslave the bodies, minds, and souls of people of African Descent. This same “Bethel Circuit,” served as a stop on the Underground

Railroad, securing passage to freedom for those who were enslaved. Pastor Pinckney kept the torch of Vesey’s struggle burning as he fought fearlessly to hold police and broader communities accountable for discriminatory practices that have resulted in the disproportionate extrajudicial murders, detainments, and interrogations of Black people. Pinckney took a stand against the unjust murder of Walter Scott and called for the watchful eye of body cameras for police officers to help deter such crimes; thus, he fought to secure freedom for those of darker hues who are yet targeted today. The martyrs of Mother Emanuel bear witness today that we must continue to carry the torch and strategize for the sake of our dignity, our humanity, our freedoms, and our right to safely assemble as people of faith and as people of African descent.

### **MAY THE AME CHURCH AND ITS FRIENDS REAFFIRM . . .**

We stand with Bro. Denmark Vesey, Bishop Morris Brown, and the “Bethel Circuit.”

### **MAY THE AME CHURCH AND ITS FRIENDS REAFFIRM . . .**

We stand with Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney, Bishop Richard F. Norris, Sr., and Emanuel AME Church.

### **MAY THE AME CHURCH AND ITS FRIENDS REAFFIRM . . .**

God is with us – martyrs: Ethel Lance, Susie Jackson, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Cynthia Hurd, Clementa Pinckney, Tywanza Sanders, Depayne Middleton Doctor, Myra Thompson, and Daniel Simmons Jr., and mourners.



The words of State Senator and Pastor Clementa C. Pinckney ring as a clarion call today, reminding us that “being a beacon and bearer of the culture and bearer of what makes us as a people” is not necessarily unique to Mother Emanuel: “It’s really what America is all about. Could we not argue that America is about freedom -- whether we live it out or not, but it really is about freedom, equality, and the pursuit of happiness? And that’s what churches are all about: freedom to worship, freedom from sin, freedom to be [fully] what God intends us to be and to have equality in the sight of God. And sometimes you’ve got to make noise to do that. Sometimes you may have to die like Denmark Vesey to do that. Sometimes you have to march, struggle, and be unpopular to do that.”

God is our refuge and strength. Surely, God hears our inquiring prayers, “How long?,” “Where shall we go?,” and “What shall we do?” May those who mourn our loss and such social circumstances as have given rise to the 17 June 2015 tragedy and hate crime pray as the widow pleading before the unjust judge with us today. Let us listen together as the Holy Spirit empowers and directs us to be advocates and workers, clergy and lay, for holy justice today. ***\*Required***

## WHAT ARE OUR COMMITMENTS?

- We, the undersigned, commit to praying for God's guidance, justice, and peace in our local churches and communities, in Charleston, SC and around the world.
- We, the undersigned, commit to strategizing and standing against racial injustice and all forms of injustice as fulfillment of our vows to God.
- We, the undersigned, will act in unity toward these ends – ensuring that we are on one accord with one another in sentiment and strategy and in-step with our ecclesial leadership in their most earnest efforts to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.
- We, the undersigned, will not turn a blind eye or be silent in response to attacks on Black culture – and especially attacks on our race, our faith, our sexuality, or our belonging.

We, the undersigned, commit to working until the holy justice of God reigns within us and the throughout the world – especially as reflected in the unequivocal affirmation of the full humanity of every individual regardless of race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, marital status or socioeconomic status – that we all may flourish and the content of our character as individuals and communities may be augmented.

## WHO ARE WE? WE ARE THE CHURCH! WE ARE THE PEOPLE!

- Rev. Jennifer S. Leath, Ph.D., Pastor (Allen AME Church, White Plains, NY)
- Rev. Stanley Hearst II, D. Min., Pastor (Historic Jones Tabernacle AME Church, Philadelphia, PA)
- Rev. Allan R. Robinson, Pastor (New Bethel AME Church, Philadelphia, PA)
- Rev. Terrel McBride, Pastor (Murphy AME Church, Chester, PA)
- Rev. Jameel A. Morrison, Pastor (Mount Zion AME Church, Bordentown, NJ)
- Rev. James C. Simmons, Pastor (Baber AME Church, Rochester, NY)
- Rev. Brandon Karl Allen, D.Min., Pastor (Agape AME Church, Buffalo, NY)
- Rev. Michael Chism, D.Min., Pastor (Campbell AME Church, Philadelphia, PA)
- Rev. Paul Thomas, Pastor (AME Union Church, Philadelphia, PA)
- Rev. Frank I. Smart, Pastor (St. Paul AME Church, Philadelphia, PA)
- Rev. Jahkimmo F. Smith, D.Min., Pastor (Mt. Zion AME Church, Southampton, Bermuda)
- Rev. Robert Augustus Jackson, Pastor (Israel Memorial AME Church, Newark, NJ)

## LEARN MORE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF MOTHER EMANUEL AME CHURCH BY VISITING:

<http://www.emanuelamechurch.org/churchhistory.php>

<https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/charleston/ema.htm>