

A Response from the Seminary Presidents of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

On January 15, 2015, the African American Presidents and Deans in Theological Education issued a call through an open letter to leaders and citizens of our country and to those who serve theological and divinity schools. The letter seeks a response to the current and persistent forces in our country that result in the violence against and devaluing of the lives of African American men and women. Indeed, the call emerges from a concern for the preservation of human dignity everywhere. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

At the annual meeting of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presidents and board chairs, Dr. Brian Blount, President of Union Presbyterian Seminary, and one of the signers of the open letter, read the letter as part of our opening prayer. We were all deeply moved.

Therefore, we the seminary presidents of the PC(USA) affirm our solidarity with you, our colleagues in theological and religious education, as we all work toward a more just world, shaped in the image of Jesus’ vision of Jubilee in which God announces good news to the poor, proclaims freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and sets the oppressed free (Luke 4:18–19, Isaiah 61:1–2).

We commit to creating and sustaining conversations, programs, and/or actions, consistent with the missions of our schools that respond to our country’s current situation so that we might embrace anew a vision of “the beloved community.”

Finally, we are grateful to you our colleagues, who have committed yourselves to the equipping and training of future leaders in our churches and in society. Your prophetic witness inspires us. Our own various complicities within oppressive structures humble us. May the Spirit of God, which dwells in each of us, transform our world so that we might more fully embrace a Christian witness that seeks to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

The peace and grace of Jesus Christ be with all of you,

The Seminary Presidents of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

- The Rev. Dr. M. Craig Barnes, President, Princeton Theological Seminary
- The Rev. Dr. Brian K. Blount, President, Union Presbyterian Theological Seminary
- The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey F. Bullock, President, the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary
- The Rev. Dr. William J. Carl, III, President, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
- The Rev. Dr. Katharine Rhodes Henderson, President, Auburn Theological Seminary
- The Rev. Dr. Michael Jenkins, President, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
- The Rev. Dr. James McDonald, President, San Francisco Theological Seminary
- The Rev. Dr. Paul T. Roberts, Sr., President, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary
- William E. Scheu, Interim President, Columbia Theological Seminary
- The Rev. Dr. Theodore J. Wardlaw, President, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary
- The Rev. Dr. Frank M. Yamada, President, McCormick Theological Seminary