As our world, and our profession of healthcare in particular, still grapple with the strain of a global pandemic, our country now faces another distressing challenge. The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmad Arbery quickly escalated the boiling and tumultuous waters of racism within our country and our culture. Today, we find ourselves confronted with the urgent need to engage in conversations about awareness as we learn, listen and seek to understand each other in the fight against systemic racism in America. As Christians, we need to do something, and we need to do something now. As an organization, we want to be part of the solution, specifically for our profession in healthcare.

Despite the brokenness of our nation, so visibly displayed in the last two weeks, we derive hope, not by succumbing to desperation and fear, but by clinging to the Word of God and pointing the angry and wounded to the suffering of our Savior, who died that we might defy our divisions and find unity. It is His Word and His body the church who alone can bring hope to the deep wounds of racism and injustice. The church has not always been a voice of racial reconciliation, for that we must confess and repent. The church and God’s people can and must find its voice, and it is to this end we set aside this day for fasting and prayer.

We go to Him…because we must! This guide is designed to help focus your thoughts and prayers as you join us in this dedicated day of prayer and fasting as we boldly approach God’s throne and ask for His grace to help us and our nation at this time.

The Word and the Church: Our Hope

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”
—Romans 15:4, ESV

Reconciliation

“He died for everyone so that those who receive His new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view…This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us….”
—2 Corinthians 5:15-20, NLT

“Reconciliation from God comes in the shape of the cross upon which Jesus died. And so, it is with reconciliation—vertically between God and man and horizontally between people who are all created in the image of God. We must have both. Pastor James Brooks loves to ask what you have if you are missing one of these components. The answer is...a stick—a plain old stick, not a cross.”
—Bruce Rowell, MD

“...‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”’ —Matthew 22:37-39, ESV
Unity

“If we believe that God’s vision for the church is one unified body, loving one another with the same love that Jesus and the Father shared, then we must acknowledge that the Enemy has been hard at work to destroy that vision. If we didn’t know the end of the story this could be discouraging, depressing news. But we know that in the end God wins. His purposes prevail. We will be the church that God intended from eternity past. That’s good news! So let’s persevere and continue the march toward true biblical reconciliation in the church.”
—John Perkins, One Blood, page 143

“I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one…May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me”
—John 17:21,23, NLT

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”
—John 13:34-35, NLT

All Created Equal

“All men are created equal and were endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, chief of those being the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” No other nation in the world has such powerful principles as its foundation! And this is why I love this country so much. We have but to live out these truths so that they apply equally to every citizen of this great nation. Every moment we delay in appropriating these principles allows the collective conscience of our nation to be dulled.”

“Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.”
—Colossians 3:11-15, ESV

Suggested Prayers

1. Confession and Repentance

Our Heavenly Father, we are humbled by the deep wounds that have been re-opened. As a largely white culture, we confess and repent of our willful ignorance and silent indifference to the pain that our African American brothers and sisters have been carrying for generations. We pray you would help us listen to the stories of their daily struggle for racial equality and reconciliation and speak out for the marginalized when we witness oppression and injustice. Help us reject all indications of partiality due to ethnicity when we encounter it, including in our own hearts. Amen.

2. Lament

The largest segment of Psalms (about one-third) is reserved for Psalms of Lament. These psalms contain the words of those whose lives are filled with pain, loss, suffering and persecution, those whose hearts are breaking under the weight of injustice. But despite their desperation, the wounded are filled with hope and trust in God’s ultimate deliverance. Their cries to God are earnest in their pleas for redress of the wrongs they are suffering. But their pleas for help are not those of the unbelieving, but of those whose confidence, despite desperate circumstances, are in the Lord. A lament is the honest groaning of the victims of a broken world who remain resolute in their hope and trust in God’s good intentions.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”
—Matthew 5:4, ESV

“With my voice I cry out to the Lord; with my voice I plead for mercy to the Lord. I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him. When my spirit faints within me, you know my way! In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. Look to the right and see: there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul. I cry to you, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.’ Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me! Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name! The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me.”
—Psalm 142:1-7, ESV
My Lament – John Perkins in One Blood
“Oh God! What do we do when the foundations are shaken!
There’s hate, distrust, and selfish greed in Your church
We’re doing the wrong things with wrong motives…
We’re not one and we are satisfied.

Lord, open our eyes to see Your Truth
Awaken in us a zeal for Your power
and Your presence among us
Break down the walls that have separated us
Help us to love with Your love

From the earliest of our existence You, O Lord, have kept us
Your Word has been a lamp and a light for our path
For all of our appointed days, we will serve You
From everlasting to everlasting – You are our God.”

My Lament – Harriet Tubman in Harriet, the Moses of Her People by Sarah Hopkins Bradford
“I had crossed the line of which I had so long been dreaming.
I was free; but there was no one to welcome me to the land
of freedom, I was a stranger in a strange land, and my home
after all was down in the old cabin quarter, with the old folks,
and my brothers and sisters. But to this solemn resolution I
came; I was free, and they should be free also; I would make
a home for them in the North, and the Lord helping me, I
would bring them all there. Oh, how I prayed then, lying all
alone on the cold, damp ground; ‘Oh, dear Lord,’ I said, ‘I ain’t
got no friend but you. Come to my help, Lord!’

3. Injustice

“Injustice, the unequal and unloving treatment of our neighbors,
quickly and logically follows idolatry. When we turn away from
the living God to pursue lies, power, wealth and self-exaltation, we
inevitably do harm to others, especially those with less power than
ourselves.”
—Rick Donlon, MD

“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; stead-
fast love and faithfulness go before you.”
—Psalm 89:14, ESV

“Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are desti-
tute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the
poor and needy.”
—Proverbs 31:8-9, ESV

“Away with your noisy hymns of praise! I will not listen to the mu-
cic of your harps. Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, an
endless river of righteous living.”
—Amos 5:23-24, NLT

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord
require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk
humbly with your God?”
—Micah 6:8, NLT

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness
and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless,
the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against
another in your heart. But they refused to pay attention and turned
a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear.
They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law
and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his Spirit through
the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD
of hosts.”
—Zechariah 7:9-12, ESV

4. The Silence Of Friends

“The world continues to witness the groans of hurting people.
Throughout our history, those who should speak do not say enough
in defense of those who are oppressed because of the color of their
skin or their ethnicity. The unheard groans of oppression eventually
lead to more suffering, grief, unrighteousness and unfortunately
human vengeance. We collectively mourn with our brothers and
sisters who experience the damaging oppression of racism and live
in fear as part of their daily experience. We also join the voices
of those protesting peacefully who have rightly denounced the violence
and vandalism that distracts from the root issues.”
—Mark Bailey, PhD

In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, But the
silence of our friends.”
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

“How long, O Lord, must I call for help? But you do not listen! ‘Vio-
lence is everywhere!’ I cry, but you do not come to save. Must I forev-
er see these evil deeds? Why must I watch all this misery? Wherever
I look, I see destruction and violence. I am surrounded by people who
love to argue and fight. The law has become paralyzed, and there is
no justice in the courts. The wicked far outnumber the righteous, so
that justice has become perverted.”
—Habakkuk 1:2-4, NLT

5. Hope

“The Reformation came in the wake of plague, pestilence, pover-
ty, famine, war, and ecclesiastical corruption. God is always up to
things in big societal upheavals.”
—Letter to the Reformed Theological Seminary Family

‘Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”
—Romans 12:12, ESV

“And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.”
—Psalm 39:7, ESV

‘Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and
supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to
God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will
guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
—Philippians 4:6-7, ESV
He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.
—Revelation 21:4, ESV

6. Our Battle

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
—Ephesians 6:12, ESV

“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”
—2 Corinthians 10:3-5, ESV

7. Love God and Neighbor

“The futility of expressing Christianity without living out the love of Christ, who laid down His life for every man without qualification, yet at the same time to identify some as more worthy of attention, to more readily defer to certain classes or ethnic groups over others is a perversion of true religion. As the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ was revealed in conditions of poverty and humiliation, such a reference would be especially suitable to this particular context where respect for the rich at the expense of the poor is so strongly deprecated.”
—R.V.G. Tasker in James, page 56

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.
—James 2:1,8-9, ESV

8. Live Out the Gospel

We long for unity, dignity, humility, justice and peace, but it is the gospel that brings true revolution, the revolution of the heart. As we live out the reality of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, “...it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, ESV). I am able to see others as those made in the image of God. I am able to love without qualification.

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.
—Philippians 2:1-5, ESV

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”
—Philippians 2:12-15, ESV

“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”
—1 Peter 2:11-12, ESV

An Appeal for Non-Violence

It is important we as Christians, regardless of ethnicity, reject the notion that the cause of racial reconciliation and the need to give a voice to the deep wounds of injustice should provide moral legitimacy to violence and rioting. Long after the violent protests are over, what is left, is burnt out mom and pop shops, boarded-up businesses, unemployment and the loss of dreams.

We should heed the words of former President Barack Obama who wrote in Medium: “Let’s not excuse violence or rationalize it or participate in it. If we want our criminal justice system and American Society at large to operate on a higher ethical code, then we have to model that code ourselves.”

Interestingly, Jesus and the apostle Paul said much the same thing more than 2,000 years ago.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
—Matthew 5:38-48, ESV
“Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ To the contrary, ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

—Romans 12:17-21, ESV

Romans 13:1-10 reminds us that God has instituted governing authority for the purpose of preserving peace and social order given the potential for unchecked expressions of evil. This does not give license to brutality in the exercise of civil authority. Where this occurs, there should be redress.

However, after generations of excessive enforcement in the African American community, it is understandable that respecting the rule of law and God’s Word on this issue has strained the hearts of the most ardent believers in the African American community. Our purpose is not to excuse excessive and selective enforcement practices, but it is to appeal to the use of legitimate avenues of redress in our society through non-violent protest, criminal justice reform (most notably championed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) and the revolution of the heart, most notably championed by Jesus Christ. The church, if it has any message in the midst of persecution and injustice, it is the gospel and the message of hope.

More Resources for You

Visit www.cmda.org/racism for additional resources focused on reversing racism’s effects on healthcare and on our nation.

Specific Topics for Prayer

1. Pray for the Lord to restore peace and order to our cities.
2. Pray for God’s comfort and peace for the families of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery.
3. Pray for God’s mercy and our forgiveness for the police officers involved in the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery. “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44, ESV).
4. Pray for our President, members of Congress, governors, city and state officials and police officers, and pray the Lord will give them wisdom and guidance to lead our nation and communities with justice for all.
5. Praise God for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that began the slow process of addressing racial injustice.
6. Pray for the Love of Christ to be displayed by Christians in words and actions.
7. Pray for greater sensitivity to the daily experiences of being profiled by law enforcement officers or the weariness of daily experiencing systemic racism (by taking the time to listen...listen...listen).
8. Pray the Lord would open our eyes to being part of the solution. What would God have me do about what I know and have seen? Pray for the Lord to give you the courage to speak up when you witness racial inequality and racial bias and prejudice.
9. Pray for your church and its leadership. Pray for wisdom about how your church can encourage and promote a greater awareness of the daily struggle among those of color.
10. Pray for the Lord to move our nation to confession and repentance for silent indifference toward racial inequality.
11. Pray for the Lord to bring revival to our nation.
12. Pray for healing in our major cities, especially Minneapolis.
13. Pray for the numerous small business owners whose livelihoods have been destroyed, along with the loss of jobs in these cities.