

## Enews for 4/19/2023

On Monday evening the Attorney General announced that Grand Jury convened to look at the evidence in the shooting of Jayland Walker would not be filing charges. Akron had been bracing for the Grand Jury's decision all week with businesses downtown boarded up, classes at the University of Akron shifting to online, and plans made to block off an area of downtown to allow for safe and peaceful protests. So far things in Akron have been quiet with some small protests and prayer circles but it feels very much like Akron is holding its breath wondering if things will get ugly later this week as the weather warms up and the weekend approaches. I touched base with leaders of our congregations in Akron Tuesday morning to see how they were feeling and how their congregations were responding. I was encouraged to hear about pastoral care extended to law enforcement and their families who feel under pressure, about mental health services to the community, and about partnerships with African American congregations to understand perspectives and experiences other than our own. This is the work of the gospel that Paul writes about in Ephesians reminding us that...

*[Christ Jesus] is our peace; in his flesh he has made both into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us, abolishing the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. (Ephesians 2:14-16)*

In Christ, God is bringing about the reconciliation of the world and calls the Church to point towards that reality by being peacemakers ourselves. I encourage all our congregations to reach out to develop the kind of relationships that will build trust and bring about reconciliation in their communities. For many of our congregations they don't even need to reach very far as they have law enforcement families sitting in the pews and have a congregation of a different theological and racial-ethnic background sharing those same pews in the afternoon. Peacemaking is not easy, but I encourage you to have courage and once again remember Paul's words to the Church in Ephesus,

*So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone in him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.*  
(Ephesians 2:19-22)

As you engage in that work, you stand upon Christ the Cornerstone, who has called and equipped you for ministry. And for that, thanks be to God!

May the Peace of Christ be with you,  
Barry