

Black Lives Matter, Biblical Justice, & Pastor Calvin

Dear First Baptist Church of Stoneham,

9/3/20

I was asked recently to clarify my stance on the Black Lives Matter official organization from a member of our congregation. Having emailed a lot about racial matters I feel that it would be best for me to make a few clarifications:

Black Lives Matter is a tricky phrase because it's more than just a phrase, it's also an official organization. While I wholeheartedly agree that Black Lives Matter and that anti-Black racism needs to be addressed (along with all forms of racism, sexism, nationalism, bigotry, etc.), I am not in full support of the official Black Lives Matter organization. The official Black Lives Matter organization has a worldview that is counter to Biblical Christianity in several areas. In addition to theological & philosophical differences, I am uncomfortable with their postmodern approach to leadership. There is no leader, board, or council for Black Lives Matter as they hold to a decentralized leadership model where each chapter is autonomous (Judges 17:6). Without the counsel of older, wiser leaders, young and overzealous members can go too far (Proverbs 19:2 & 1 Kings 12:1-19), as was the case with [the harassment of Lauren B. Victor in DC](#). The issue is further expounded on by Dahleen Glanton in her article [Reparations are about economic stability, not a looted pair of \\$120 Nikes](#) and given a case study Bob Chiarito in his article [Older Englewood Leaders To Young Protesters: Don't 'Disrupt Our Neighborhood' And Leave Us With Angry Police](#).

My heart for racial justice is rooted in Scripture. As a follower of Christ, I believe the demand for justice should be persistent but nonviolent, firm but loving, truthful but also forgiving. The Black Lives Matter organization and I both want to see the end of racism, but our methods, philosophy, and ultimate outcomes are different. Fighting racism in Policing, housing, education, entertainment, and the economy are only one aspect of a bigger picture. There is also a spiritual component and this is a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:10-13). There are definite practical things that we need to do to fight for justice such as voting, advocacy, education, etc. (Proverbs 31:8-9), but we need to know that all of the heavy lifting is in the hands of Christ and His work on the Cross.

As your pastor my desire is to lead us into a Christianity that is both faithful to Scripture and active in expressing the love, truth, and justice of Christ. Our source material for justice is the Bible and our example is Christ, who called out injustice and offered forgiveness, who defended the oppressed while offering love to the oppressor. There are many good things that the Black Lives Matter organization has done, especially in raising awareness. That said, I believe that the church of Christ is the one organization that, if it follows Christ, can lead the way toward true justice and change in our world by putting our faith into action. This is why the Justice Gathering I did in July was soaked in Christian theology, music, and messages and followed more of a classic 60's Civil Rights mass meeting format and feel.

Lastly, I had mentioned in an email that a woman in Stoneham had received a nasty and racist letter because she had a Black Lives Matter yard sign up. I said that I was considering putting up a large Black Live Matter flag in my yard. At no time was I considering putting up a Black Lives Matter flag or banner at the church. After further thought and discussion with

Lindsey, I decided to not put up a Black Lives Matter flag for fear of confusing our support of the phrase with the organization. Instead, I have up the [Afro-American flag](#) that was designed by artist David Hammons, which is a combination of the [Pan-African flag](#) and the American flag.

Hopefully, this clarifies any confusion. I respect the heart and desire of the Black Lives Matter organization but have definite points of disagreement. For me, I believe that racial justice should come from a Christian context with a Christian understanding of justice, true, forgiveness, and reconciliation. I leave you all with one more article that I feel is very apropos, [Goodbye Christ. I've Got Justice Duty](#) by Michael O. Emerson. You can't have real justice without Jesus.

Love,

Pastor Calvin