

Introductory remarks at the anti-racism vigil in Fremont, Ohio June 3, 2020.  
The Rev. Matt Wahlgren  
St Paul's Episcopal Church  
Fremont, Ohio

Today I am here to repent. I here to repent for all the times I have been silent. All the times I didn't stand up to racist statements, and demeaning jokes. I repent of the deep damage my silence has done to this world.

Rabbi Joachim Prinz, a refugee from Germany at the March on Washington said, "The most urgent and most disgraceful, the most shameful, the most tragic problem is silence."

We are here to lift the dark veil of silence.

We are here to stand with those who have been oppressed for far too long. What has been happening in this country to our black and brown friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens is not civil and it's not right. We gather because there is clearly more work to be done. I am sorry that I have not been moved to this point earlier in my life. I am sorry that I thought I could pretend I was not part of the problem and quietly live my life. But the time for that delusion is over. So today I stand with all of you. I have learned that it is not enough to say 'I'm not a racist' ...it is not enough claim to be an ally and stand beside someone else in their fight. I have learned that we need work hand in hand to make change. Today we raise our voices together and cry out ENOUGH! and tomorrow and the days after we work for long lasting systemic changes for equality and equity for all."

This is not a momentary stand we make together today, but a turning and setting a new trajectory that must continue until justice is done. Until laws are created to hold accountable those that abuse power, until the talks we have with our children are the same talks.

We stand against racism in all its subtle and not so subtle forms.  
We stand against the systems that incarcerate black and brown bodies at unjust rates  
We stand against those that fear others, and do violence to bodies because of pigmentation.  
We stand against the hurt that continues to be caused by even those that are supposed to protect.

We are only against these things because we are for something so much greater.  
Today...

We stand for equity and equality for all  
We stand for love that can celebrate the differences between us.

We stand for ears that can hear even when the message hurts because it shines a bright light on our souls.

We stand for a world where we all come together.

We stand today because love calls us to. Love calls us to go out and open some eyes.

James Baldwin said "Neither love nor terror makes one blind: indifference makes one blind."

Today we stand out here with our signs and our voices because this blindness is unacceptable. I pray and I hope that love will open our eyes and the eyes of those passers by.

Lets get out there and help some people see! Let's heal the blind!