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News and Information from the North American Division

NEWSPOINTS

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NAD President Addresses Racial Tensions in the U.S.

My dear fellow Seventh-day Adventists, members of the church throughout North America, and our division,

For the past 10 years it has been my privilege and blessing to serve as your president. It has been an invigorating and challenging road, and one where God has blessed us, and where your faithful commitment to Him has allowed the church in our division to carry out His mission.

This has been especially true in these days of COVID-19 where your faithfulness has been magnificent. In a few days now I will cease my role as your president, but I want you to know that I am proud of what God has accomplished through you.

The reason that I am coming to you today, however, is different. Like many of you, I am heartbroken as a result of the wanton and hateful violence that led to the death of George Floyd. One cannot describe this in any other way than what it is: a horrible illustration of what happens when men feel that they are superior to others. This thinking allows racism and prejudice to grow. It provides the fuel that powers hatred and murder. This incident, furthermore, is one of a series of actions perpetrated against blacks in America. Together, these experiences leads us all to question the guarantees of freedom and justice enshrined in the constitutions of the nations that make up our division.

To my African American brothers and sisters, I want you to know that I am deeply sorry. I am saddened that you have experienced prejudice and bigotry — even in the church — and that there have been times when you were not allowed eat in the same cafeteria or go to the same washroom as whites. I am deeply sorry that you have experienced these things. As a white man I know little of your suffering, but I suffer with you today as you look out at a future that seems uncertain. It is wrong that you should live with fear because of your color. I am sorry. Together with hundreds of thousands of other white people I want to say to you: “I love you — you are my flesh and blood in Jesus.”

To all of our members I say that if we are truly Christians we who know ourselves to be Seventh-day Adventists will demonstrate God’s love. One of Jesus’ great statements was and is, “By this will all men know that you are my disciples in that you have love one for the other” [John 13:35, sic]. It is the litmus test for Christians. If we disdain and denigrate others on the basis of race, gender, economic status, etc., then we are not Christians. We may have a name but, in this regard, it is only a flimsy robe that we garb ourselves in — in order to maintain our self-satisfied superiority.

It is time for us all to do some soul searching. If David could appeal to God to search him in order to see if there was “any wicked way in him,” it is our time to do the same. In this regard our family needs a radical change. Our church needs transformation: If change is to take place in the church then it needs to take place

first in me.

It is not OK to tolerate or propagate racial slurs, to laugh at jokes that target others because of their status, etc. Furthermore, it isn't appropriate for us to remain silent when others suffer, are victimized and marginalized. The gospel of Jesus Christ is active. It is not passive. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "There comes a time when silence is betrayal. ... In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

Many have asked in recent days: "What should we do? How should we act?" Well, it is not mine — nor is it in the capacity of the church to dictate to you what you should or should not do in this time of crisis. However, our guidance should be based upon the life and teachings of Jesus. Whatever will bring dignity, and reform, and blessing to others — whatever will demonstrate true love to a broken and battered world — whatever will bring others to look to God — do these things as you are personally guided by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, my friends, let it be clearly recognized that the work of God on this planet will not be finished — I repeat — will not be finished until we, as a people, connect with God in such a way that we will be instruments in His hands to demonstrate His love.

No program or busy-work will solve the problems of the church as important as they may seem. We must go to our knees and ask God to make us His agents in order to demonstrate His love. Then our programs and objectives will take on a new meaning.

I want to remind us all of the words of one of our founding leaders, Ellen White, who said, "From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church will be made manifest — even to principalities and powers in the heavenly places the final and the full display of the love of God" [*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9, sic]. That is our mission. It must infiltrate our words and every aspect of our work. It must be clearly seen in our voted actions and interactions. Then and only then will the church have fulfilled her mission.

God has a dream. His dream is that one day, at a grand table spread out in heaven, seated next to each other and across from each other, will be men and women, young people, boys and girls, from every nation, kindred, tongue, and tribe and people. That they will fellowship together in His presence and that the harmony of

those moments will go on through the ceaseless ages of eternity. God wants the table experience to start now in your heart and mine.

May God bless each of us. I pray that His Holy Presence will guide you today, and in each day to come. We are living in the final days of human history. Let us stand tall for the God who called us to be His children — His witnesses, every one of us.

Amen.

— *Daniel R. Jackson is president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America; this is taken from the transcript of Jackson's [video message](#).*

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