



June 18, 2015

**Church Council of Greater Seattle Statement on the Shooting at
Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina**

The Church Council of Greater Seattle shares our deep sorrow with the family and church members of the victims of the horrific shooting tragedy yesterday at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. The news that members were engaged in prayer at the time of the shooting makes our grief even more profound. Taking the lives of these innocent people of faith was an act of senseless violence that violates our common humanity. We deplore this crime of hatred at a church rooted in the movement of freedom from slavery and which has served as a crossroads for the Civil Rights Movement. Having taken place in the sacred space of a church, we share the message of the Rev. William Cornell Brooks, President and CEO of the South Carolina NAACP, that this heinous deed amounts to a "desecration of the soul of a country." We join our prayers with the congregation and the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. We know that as the families of those whose lives were taken mourn, Jesus himself weeps at this tragedy.

Every life is precious in God's eyes. Each person has an inviolable human dignity as a child of our Creator. The lives of all who were shot by the perpetrator are unique, God-given and have ultimate value. We stand in solidarity with the African American community in Charleston and the African American community in Seattle, King and South Snohomish Counties. We say no to acts of hatred; we say no to the conduct of murderous violence; we say no to the diminishment of some lives in order to aggrandize other lives; we say no to any devaluing of human life on the basis of race or ethnicity or any kind of objectification or commodification of people.

We say yes to the God of life; we say yes to our conviction that no matter how it will happen, God will overcome; we say yes to the genuine solidarity of love that knows no borders; and we say yes to joining our hearts even in this time of heartbreak for in faith and prayer God's justice will prevail. May God bless and shower his mercy upon the people of Emanuel AME Church, the families of the victims and the city of Charleston.