



'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'
The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:30-31)

Our faith communities, like yours, are filled with loving people who want to help others. Over the years, in partnership with others, to help those in need, we have established many charitable ministries. For too long we have been satisfied with meeting immediate needs but failed to work on sustainable change. But this is not enough. It has never been enough.

Recently the Racial Equity Index has exposed deep ills within our town.

- 45.7 % of children in this city live in poverty.
- Blacks are three times as likely to live in poverty as whites.
- The wage gap for Black and Latina women shows that they are paid less than 57 cents for every dollar paid to their white male counterparts.

Poverty and racism are an offense to God.

Data from reliable sources indicates that the life expectancy of a child born today less than two miles northwest of Main Street, Spartanburg is 68.2 years while a child born two miles southeast of Main Street, Spartanburg is 85.3 years – a difference of over 17 years.

As congregations, we resolve to take sustained bold action to transform Spartanburg fully into God's intentions. No longer will we accept systems and structures that disadvantage people according to race, gender, and economic status.

We further resolve to work fervently to transform the structures that perpetuate poverty and racism. We pray God will give us the strength and wisdom to fully love our neighbors as ourselves. We will seek to open our hearts to our Lord's radical love for everyone and grow our personal relationships with those from different racial and economic backgrounds than our own.

We challenge other faith communities, governmental agencies, businesses, and non-profits to the radical love and self-giving that would allow all children to thrive. We remind ourselves that scripture warns us that it were better to hang a millstone around our neck than to be a stumbling block before the youngest and most vulnerable of society. (Luke 17:2)

The sheer magnitude of these statistics shows us that no one group can achieve what is necessary. It will take all of Spartanburg to act with courage, fortitude, and self-giving love to begin to make a difference. Let us all commit to work to transform our town so that it may be truly said that we love God with everything we've got by radically loving and standing in solidarity with those in deepest need.

This statement has been supported by several individuals and congregations: Central United Methodist Church; Fernwood Baptist Church; First Presbyterian Church Spartanburg; Hub City Church; Life with Jesus Ministries; Maranatha Free Church of Jesus Christ/Angels Charge Ministry; New Day Baptist Church; Second Presbyterian Church; Spartanburg Methodist College; Temple B'nai Israel; Tyger River Presbyterian Church; Unitarian Universalist Church; Virginia (Ginger) Shuler, Community Builder; Valerie Barnet.

If you'd like to join in support of this statement, please contact Caroline Goodman at cgoodman@fpcspartanburg.org.