



Emory Grove United Methodist Church

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Timothy B. Warner, M.Div., Sr. Pastor

March 24, 2023

Town Council of Washington Grove (digitally)

Re: Support for the proposed "Resolution Acknowledging Washington Grove's Racially Exclusionary Past".

Dear Neighbors:

I write to offer my strongest support for the adoption of this resolution. I have read it in its entirety and find it complete and well-researched, accurately reflecting the history as it has been written in the sources to which it refers. The resolution is an excellent and necessary symbolic gesture in that it plainly acknowledges the difficult and painful truth that the town's behavior, though typical of people across the entire nation at the time, was racist, demeaning, exclusionary and painful. As a minister of the gospel and community-builder for these last several decades, I commend this resolution because there can be no movement forward for the town with any of its neighbors if the truth about its history is not acknowledged. It is only on the basis of a mutual understanding of the truth that enough trust can be established to build mutually-beneficial and authentic relationships that help convey us all into the future that I think we all prefer.

I have been proud to serve as the Sr. Pastor of Emory Grove United Methodist Church for very nearly a decade, and I lived in that community for about 25 years. During that time I have come to know intimately the difficult and inextricable history of the two towns, and it causes me great shame that all of this history has its roots in racism as Methodism's original sin. It is difficult for me to reconcile that a denomination that has done so much good in the world, also led in the propagation and institutionalization of the racism that has traumatized and oppressed so many. Black, white or other, I think we all live in this internal and external tension because to live in America has always meant to live in an intentionally racist environment.

I have heard many stories from people with whom I have had personal and trusting relationships in both towns. I have eaten meals in houses in Washington Grove, preached frequently at Washington Grove United Methodist Church, and have entertained friends who are Washington Grove residents in my home. I co-founded The Racial Justice Coalition that has given rise to the Learning To Be Antiracist Together work group (some members of which are Washington Grove resident) which has built relationships of trust across racial and religious barriers to do antiracist work together. Some of that work has been in conjunction with RASEC, Washington Grove UMC, Emory Grove UMC and the Historic Emory Grove Rotary Club, so I think I have a good idea of the feelings and thinking of people in both towns.

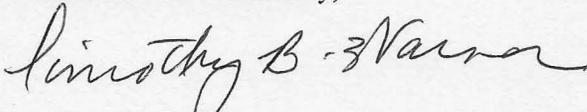
I know for certain that people of the old Emory Grove experienced trauma because of attitudes and positions taken by Washington Grove residents throughout the years, and that Washington Grove's reputation still causes pain in the Emory Grove community because even younger people link Washington Grove's exclusivity to the stories of blatant and intentional racism related to them by elders whom they honor and revere. I also know for certain that while the majority of people in Washington Grove seem to support this resolution, there are others who have difficulty reconciling

the personal tension they encounter when the family members whom they revere are publicly identified to have participated in racist behavior. I can only hope and pray that in both cases, the acknowledgement of the historical truth will help lead everyone into a better future together. I believe that in both cases, the tension can be both instructive and constructive.

In this resolution the people of Washington Grove have an opportunity to chart a different, more just, more connected and more peace-filled future with its neighbors. With or without the resolution, some amazing work has already begun between the residents and institutions in both towns because people are hungry in their souls for the results of that work. I believe this amazing work will continue among some of us whether or not the town passes this resolution.

What will be completely unreconcilable, however, is if the Town of Washington Grove, having had this opportunity to invest in its future by acknowledging its well and self-documented past racism, and by claiming an antiracist future for itself, records a vote not to do so. It will, then, both have intentionally claimed its racist past as its current practice, and proclaimed to its neighbors that racism continues to be a foundational principal of its communal existence.

Yours in beloved community,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Timothy B. Warner". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Rev. Timothy B. Warner

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