**MINUTE ON POLICE VIOLENCE AND RACIAL JUSTICE**

Germantown Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends condemns the unjustified killings of unarmed Black children and adults in Missouri, New York, Ohio and elsewhere. Likewise, we condemn the refusal to hold the police who killed them accountable. Violence by some police, implicitly condoned by prosecutors who choose not to act, deprives Black citizens of their lives without due process of law. We also decry the systemic devaluation and marginalization of certain people which allow this horrific violence to continue.

This violence and the inaction of some governmental authorities represent fundamental challenges to the Religious Society of Friends’ testimonies of Equality, Social Justice, Peace and Community. We know all persons to be equally worthy of love, respect and justice through the practice of our faith in which we experience the spark of the Divine present in each of us.

This country has a long history of legal and institutionally sanctioned racism. And even when not legally sanctioned, racism has flourished. Some leaders in law enforcement have acknowledged its history of unfairness to minorities and other disfavored groups. We affirm the many fair and compassionate police men and women who daily risk their lives protecting people in our communities. And we applaud law enforcement’s efforts to redress the unfortunate history of racism. However, much more must be done. We call upon the public, elected officials and civil authorities to eliminate racism in enforcement of the law and the administration of justice, including the following initiatives.

* It is incumbent upon police who have sworn to protect the people of their community to overcome bias, prejudice and cynicism in carrying out their duties to protect all citizens. We support training and initiatives such as community based policing to address this need.
* We condemn the use of lethal force and urge changes in police management, supervision, recruitment and training so that deadly force is the last option rather than one of the first to be employed during confrontations between police and citizens.
* We support reform of the criminal justice system to ensure that police use of deadly force gets adequate and transparent judicial review. Such decisions should not be at the sole discretion of the District Attorney or prosecutor.
* We oppose the arming of police with military grade weapons through U.S. government grant programs. Providing police with greater firepower encourages a military mentality. People in the community are alienated and perceived as the enemy rather than citizens to be protected.
* We support strict enforcement of much more stringent gun control laws. This will reduce the availability of deadly weapons and gun-related violence in our communities and the risk of armed confrontations between citizens and police.
* We urge our civic leaders to address the root causes of problems facing our poor urban communities and in particular the challenges facing Black youth – poor education, unemployment and under employment. Disproportionate confrontation between police and Black youth will not end until Black youth have real opportunities to be productive and creative members of our community and the larger society.

As Friends we are committed to a community and a world without racism. However, we have work to do ourselves. We must understand that we are complicit in a system that grants privilege based solely on being in the majority while denying privilege to others. We must confront our resulting assumptions and biases and work to overcome them in our Meeting, the larger Society of Friends and the greater community. We urge Friends and all citizens to become involved in their local communities and to exercise what influence they can at all levels of society to accomplish these objectives and to achieve greater racial and social justice.