Dear Earth & Spirit Center Community,

Racism and oppression have been a part of our country since the first Europeans arrived centuries ago. The recent protests in Louisville and across the country in connection with the killing of Breonna Taylor here in Louisville, and George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery elsewhere, have revealed that our country still falls far short of its ideals of liberty and justice for all. The board and staff of the Passionist Earth & Spirit Center stand with all who mourn and are enraged by these deaths and those of so many other innocent black lives. We acknowledge the anger and frustration so many are expressing; the time to dismantle racism and end white privilege is long overdue.

We ask ourselves: how can the Earth & Spirit Center make a difference? How can the tools of mindfulness meditation and compassion drawn from the spiritual traditions of the world guide us in responding appropriately to systemic injustice and current racial tensions in constructive ways, so that the Earth and all beings may flourish?

First and most importantly, the Earth & Spirit Center embraces the truth of interdependence. All human beings – along with the other-than-human world – are part of one single, sacred community. When there is suffering and injustice anywhere, affecting anyone, all of us are affected. None of us can fully thrive unless all of us thrive.

Recognizing that we are all linked together, each one of us is called to practice active, engaged solidarity and compassion. This is more than simple empathy for those who suffer; it is the active effort to heal wounds and right wrongs, on all levels.

Solidarity and compassion will take different forms for each one of us. Those of us who are white must assume the moral responsibility to examine our own complicity in social inequality. We must strive to unveil and forgo the benefits of white privilege that only some can access. As allies of the black community, we stand with our black sisters and brothers by raising our voices against racial injustice and white supremacy when we hear statements that are subtly or blatantly racist, bigoted, and divisive.

All of us must commit ourselves to the pursuit of truth and justice. Truth, because we need to know both the facts of particular circumstances and the facts of larger, more systemic forms of inequality. Justice, because perpetrators must be held accountable for their actions and because large-scale systems and structures that perpetuate inequality must change.

Compelled and guided by our mission to foster a flourishing Earth community, we at the Earth & Spirit Center have been reflecting on our role and responsibility in a time of when racial inequity is in full view and white privilege is being exposed. We commit to at least these three efforts:

1. We will continue to teach the practices of engaged mindfulness and compassion to as wide and diverse an audience as possible, so more and more people have tools to respond helpfully and skillfully in these challenging times. We continue to seek new opportunities
and creative new methods to do this – often on a pro-bono or cost-reduced basis. We have also offered to provide mindfulness and compassion trainings to Louisville Metro police and other government officials.

2. We will continue our efforts to expand the diversity of our own board, staff, and program participants, and to forge and maintain active partnerships with other organizations who actively serve people of color, such as our ongoing collaboration to share mindfulness practices with participants at the Louisville Urban League.

3. We will create a safe space where people can learn to speak honestly and effectively about race, racism, and injustice. We recently offered a 10 week course in Mindfulness and Racial Equity and plan to offer it and similar courses in additional venues and formats. Please look for further communication about these and other opportunities to engage the issues of racial injustice in a constructive way.

Our hearts are united in pain and in hope with all who suffer from racism and injustice, especially as we recognize the various and sometimes subtle ways in which white people are complicit. May all beings be free from fear and suffering in these troubled times, and may we all follow the universal spiritual commandment to love one another.

Sincerely,

The Earth & Spirit Center Board of Directors and Staff

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