June 19, 2015

Once again our nation is reeling from the horrific account of the senseless murder of nine people in Charleston, South Carolina. Most unsettling is the fact that this so called, “Hate Crime” occurred at the Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a place where people have gone since 1787 for solace and sanctuary, for healing and comfort, a church of historic significance that was born out of a quest for racial justice for African Americans. With the manifold mixture of emotions generated through such a heart-wrenching act, the questions are raised, “How then do we, as a nation in general and as National Baptist in particular, respond to this tragedy? How do we make sense out of such a senseless act? How do we work to ensure that we alleviate or eliminate such mindless atrocities?

First, as Christians, we are called upon to offer prayers and condolences to the family of the nine victims as well as for the perpetrator and his family. All of them are in need of our prayers. Not only do they need our prayers but they need our support that will demonstrate our commitment to insure that those who fell victim of such unthinkable hatred, bigotry and apparent racism will not have died in vain but rather their deaths should prove to be redemptive for our entire nation. Secondly, we must not allow this act to strip us as a community of believers or as a nation in general from our faith and trust in God, nor from the faith and premises upon which this country was founded. I believe that part of the challenge we face in America today is that as a nation we seem to subscribe to a philosophy that says that there are no absolute truths or values. Therefore, we have become casualties of situational ethics and contextual moralities. However, in spite of this we must maintain our faith, stay the course, stand on scripture and ultimately, trust God for the outcome.

Such an act of violence is yet another call for us, as Christians in general and as National Baptists, in particular, to encourage the leaders of our country, persons in authority, and all who give voice in the public square to be mindful of the divisive tenor and tone of the rhetoric they use when reacting, responding or offering remedies for many of the challenges that confront us here in the 21st Century. All too often, the verbiage used escalates rather than eradicates negativity in thought, word, and deed. It is ours to work tirelessly to identify the
root cause of this and similar such heinous acts. We must come together as a race of people, return to our First Love, revitalize our rich heritage and history, and most importantly realize who and Whose we are, united in purpose, and standing on one accord. Then we must reach out in Christian love to those who are different from us, reach out with open minds and hearts that serve as a catalyst to conversations leading to definitive actions which allow a meeting of the minds on different philosophies and ideologies. Ultimately, it is ours, National Baptists, as well as all Christians, to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world in our respective communities; salt that purges and purifies and light that leads and leavens our hearts, our minds, and our spirits toward the saving power and presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, Who is the Christ. Through this we can extend the life of Christ and express His love in such a manner that we simply do not just declare the Gospel with our lips, but we demonstrate the Gospel with our lives.

**A Day of Prayer for Emanuel A. M. E. Church and the Charleston, SC Community**

**On Sunday, June 21, 2015**, I am encouraging all of our churches to have a time of special prayer for the families who have been victimized by this unspeakable tragedy, as well as all churches of all faiths that God will guard, guide and order our steps as we seek to bring healing not only to those who are personally affected by it but healing for our entire nation.

Dr. Jerry Young, President

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Learn more about historic Emanuel A.M.E. Church here: [http://www.emanuelamechurch.org](http://www.emanuelamechurch.org)