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Dear friends in Christ,

You have been on my mind and in my heart all week. It has been a hard week after several difficult months. In the coming days you will see candle lights shining from the windows of The Atlee House, throwing light out into the night. While many of us have lost track of time, during this season of COVID-19, we are not so lost to have forgotten that we share the signs of God's light, those candles, during the dark nights of Advent and Christmas, not at the beginning of summer. Why now, you might be wondering?

That light is to be a symbol – a reminder to a hurting world, an aching country, and weary communities that the light of Christ never dims and shines into the darkest of nights. Though summer is just around the corner, we are living in a kind of “winter of discontent,” when unrest has firmly planted itself in our social, political, and religious realms. Darkness in the shape of discord, doubt, despair, and death is laying hold on us. This darkness illuminates the brokenness, the ache, of our individual and collective hearts and body.

When we are already weary of the social isolation brought on by this global pandemic, we hear of and watch the agony cried out from our black and brown brothers, sisters, and siblings as time and time again they suffer from the pain of racism, violence, and injustice. Regardless of where each one of us stands on the political spectrum, we must recognize this cry from our neighbors and siblings in Christ. Throughout the Bible we are taught to recognize the humanity of everyone, to see that we are all equal in the eyes of the God who created us, and we are to treat one another with love. As people of Christ, we denounce violence stemming from hatred and self-indulgence, and we denounce racism of any kind.

We each have our own journey in this time. For me, this week has been both very painful and insightful. As I watched the riots and the protests, my heart ached for all the pain that was spilling out onto our streets, and for the pain of racism that has woven itself throughout the history of our country. I struggled all week long to find the words to say to you. I felt so ill-equipped to speak to such a painful time, and then God helped me to see. God answered my prayers for guidance and help.

Last night I attended my first march ever. I gathered with clergy and people from all walks of life on Monument Ave, and we prayed. We prayed and we prayed, and then we walked down Monument Ave to Monroe Park. As we walked, we continued to pray. A large group of folks, again from all walks of life and of all ages, gathered peacefully. We heard words of wisdom and calls for change. While we stood listening to the speakers, I walked around the entire group just

watching. As I watched, I saw many acts of compassion, and I saw the people of God coming together and showing love to one another. I realized last night, that for now, my work is to listen and to show up. As I said, we each have our own journey to travel. I get this makes people uncomfortable and possibly angry. *And* I am uncomfortable too. Let us not turn from each other or choose anger over love. Let us, for now, listen – pray – learn – and listen some more. God *IS* with us, my dear friends, and will walk this journey with us.

Illuminating darkness - this is where my letter to you began - as I wrote about the candles in the windows of The Atlee House. Candles and light have long been an image the church has used for the in-breaking, the incarnation (Advent and Christmas), the presence of God in our world. Jesus calls himself the *Light of the World* and his followers are being called to be children of the light.

As a symbol of the light of Jesus' love for us and for everyone, we will shine our lights in the windows of our beloved Atlee House. In this time of a global pandemic, of loneliness and fear, of injustice and cries for change, of pain and darkness, may these lights break through the darkness we may be feeling and shine brightly into our communities. I invite you to pull out your Christmas lights and place them in your windows once again. I also ask you to reach out to family and friends and share this idea. It is a simple one, yet it has such deep roots in our faith. Let us all place a light in our windows to remind this hurting world of God's love that breaks through all darkness and shines brightly with hope.

I invite you to join me in our *#LightOfLove Project*. Share this simple idea. Take a picture if you want and share these hashtags (*#LightofLove, #LightofChrist*) on social media so to help spread our message – Jesus' message of love conquering darkness and fear. I have attached an explanation of our *#LightofLove Project* to this letter. May the Holy Spirit and social media spread this wide and may God's light bring strength, love, and hope to all.

Peace and love to you,
Katherine+