

### **Facebook Comments – from Peter Nord, retired Executive of the Presbytery of Baltimore**

For the past few weeks I have been watching with great interest what has been happening in my beloved Baltimore, where I was privileged to live for more than ten years.

For those who have never lived in West Baltimore, driven along North Avenue, or gone to church on Eden St in East Baltimore, there is no way that most Americans can understand what is going on. For those who have never been called to jury duty in the City of Baltimore and then witness the judge asking how many people had a relative who had a negative experience with the police and then seen more than half of the two hundred people raise their hands, there is no way that most Americans can understand what is going on. For those who have not sent their children to a school where less than half of the people graduate, or who live in a food desert, or had had a job that was six miles from home and had to take a two hour bus ride to get to work and a two hour bus ride to return home, there is no way that most Americans can understand what is going on. For those who have never lived in a city with more than 300 murders in a year or talked with their neighbor whose child was shot - because she, as an elementary school child was simply out on her porch, there is no way that the majority of Americans can understand what is going on.

I am still hopeful, however. I am hopeful because for days people have marched peacefully and expressed their hope for justice in a system that has rarely been just for them. I am hopeful because religious leaders of all stripes have gone out on the streets and talked with gang members and the frustrated and stepped between them and the police. I am hopeful because after the limited destruction that occurred on Monday, thousands came out to clean up the mess. I am hopeful because people prayed more than they threw rocks and because they were able to hold on to and advance their concern regarding the real problems in Baltimore in spite of the desire by the media to exploit the few hours when things went poorly. I am hopeful because, at its heart, Baltimore has a history of seeking and establishing greater justice and have taken the death of Mr Freddie Gray as an opportunity to advance this cause.

And I am grateful that two women who happen to be African American are doing amazing work in leading their city and that the police chief who also happens to be African American is seeking to change the systemic issues that have plagued his department.

Finally, we have seen a major city take on the issues that have made Americans wonder if black lives matter and done so with appropriate speed and care. Perhaps the State's Attorney will not be successful in her prosecution, but the fact remains that for the first time everyone will get their day in court - both the police officers and the family of Mr Gray. This is what America strives to be and Baltimore, in providing a day in court for all the parties, makes me proud of my former home and city. All of which continue to be in my prayers. Blessings to you all.