Dear Members of the University Community,

Please allow us to speak for the entire University of Lynchburg community in expressing our deep sadness over recent events in Minneapolis and around the country. The senseless deaths of African Americans — including George Floyd in Minneapolis, Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, and Breonna Taylor in Kentucky — should prompt all of us to pause and ask some difficult questions.

How can we, as a community, make a positive difference? In this already turbulent time of the pandemic, can we set aside our differences and biases to come together for meaningful change? How can you, as an individual, bring to bear the core values instilled at the University of Lynchburg and begin to affect positive change and healing in your community?

Make no mistake, while we are deeply saddened and disturbed by the violence that has erupted over the past week, we are also deeply offended and angry. We condemn racial and judicial discrimination of any form. We stand with the citizens of Minneapolis and the dozens of other communities around the country where peaceful protests have devolved into violence.

While these events appear to be removed from the University and the City of Lynchburg, their force has a profound impact upon members of our community. They are a stark reminder that we continue to reflect upon and address our own systems and biases. This is all the more challenging as our community has been separated by the pandemic these past months and many are dealing with illness, loss of jobs, financial instability, and the uncertainty of what the future will bring.

Over these past months we have come together in an astounding way to help one another complete a difficult semester. We’ve worked and studied remotely, we’ve practiced social distancing, we’ve helped one another to stay safe in anticipation of our return to campus for the fall semester.

We ask that all members of our community continue to come together and to stay connected in these turbulent times. Talk with family, friends, classmates, and colleagues. Raise your voices against all racial injustices and senseless acts of violence.

But, please do so in a peaceful and respectful way.

Students, faculty and staff, we want to remind you of the resources available through the University’s Office of Spiritual Life and Office of Equity and Inclusion. We urge you to seek out their support.

It is important that we support and care for one another in these challenging times and that we remember that we are all empowered to stand up and speak out against injustice.
Our thoughts are with you wherever you are around the country. Please be safe and always remember to speak your truth.

Sincerely,

Kenneth R. Garren, PhD
President

Alison Morrison-Shetlar, PhD
President-elect

Robert L. Canida, PhD
Diversity and Inclusion Officer