



# Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

404 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

925-822-3744

Friday, April 21, 2023

Dear Antioch city leaders, Antioch Police Chief Dr. Steven Ford, Antioch faith communities, and concerned citizens of Contra Costa County,

Re: Antioch Policing Response

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County and its predecessor organization, the Council of Churches, have provided chaplains for the youth of Juvenile Hall and the Boys Ranch since the early 1960's. Currently, we have two Interfaith Juvenile Chaplains, Rev. Julius Van Hook and Rev. Alexandria Spearman, serving our young people's spiritual and emotional needs. A few years ago, we were surprised to hear from Reverend Van Hook that juveniles from Antioch arrive in custody more physically battered, on average, than from any other city in Contra Costa County.

We are deeply disturbed and concerned about this ongoing situation and lament that nothing is being done to address these alleged human rights violations. The news medias has highlighted racist texting and denigrating speech are commonly used by some police officers on social media to refer to people of color. We feel obligated to raise our voices joining with others calling for the creation of a new more compassionate Antioch culture! The Interfaith Council calls for better training and oversight of the Antioch police. Our public servants must be committed to serve every person with dignity and respect.

We call on the citizens of Antioch, our member congregations, and people of good will to join us in making our voices heard for the fair treatment of people of every age and race. We especially raise our voices to protect and nourish our young people who are our future. We expect changes in policy and supervision of police officers who have been involved in a culture of oppression. We support the current efforts of the Antioch City Council for a complete audit of the Police Department. As public servants, police officers are never above the law.

We expect all municipal and county police departments to become more vigilant in eradicating any bias from their employees and public servants paying special attention to the effect of police prejudice and brutality impacting the lives of young people.

Sincerely,

Governing Board of the  
Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County