



The United Methodist Church

Florida + Episcopal Area

Kenneth H. Carter, Jr.
Resident Bishop

February 19, 2014

The Honorable Governor Rick Scott
State of Florida
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Governor Scott,

As the Florida legislative session approaches, I am writing to ask for your openness to the revision and repeal of Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law. While the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis and subsequent trials were not directly related to this law, I am convinced that its presence on the books and in the minds of our citizens provides a basis for the default use of violence, not as a last but as a first resort.

I serve and lead in the tradition of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, who called us to be peacemakers, and the Methodist tradition, which has, as its first General Rule, to "do no harm." I also live and work in the context of a state that is racially divided, economically stressed, increasingly violent and communally destabilized. There is empirical evidence that the "Stand Your Ground" law has a disproportionate effect on persons of color, and especially young African-American males. I have urged the Anglo members of our church to listen to the voices of our African-American neighbors—they will hear lamentation, unbelief, rage, resignation and pathos.

I am asking that you use your influence, as the governor of all of the people of our state, to transcend our political divisions in seeking the well-being and safety (sanctuary) of our citizens. I hope you will call us to rethink the basis of the "Stand Your Ground" law, and take steps toward seeking a more just law, and thus a more secure future. I am praying for the repeal, or at least the revision of the "Stand Your Ground" law. It may seem to be a political impossibility, and yet the gospel reminds me that what is impossible for us is possible for God.

You have my very best wishes in your stewardship of the office of Governor of our state.

Sincerely,

Kenneth H. Carter, Jr.
Resident Bishop
Florida Conference of The United Methodist Conference