

Mr. Goodloe Sutton
Publisher, Linden Democrat-Reporter
201 West Street
Linden, AL 36748.

February 19, 2019

Dear Mr. Sutton:

I read with shock and horror your editorial calling on the Ku Klux Klan to “night ride again.” I read of your further comments calling on the Klan to “clean out DC.” I was appalled and pained by your comments. I was also shocked and disgusted by your inference that former slaves dressed as Klansman to terrorize and kill people.

I write with anger and disappointment. And I write with the hope that I will live beyond my anger and disappointment and be able to express a hope that allows me to remember that you are a child of God. Even though I disagree with you strongly, I seek to remember your humanity.

I have made a contribution in your name to the Southern Poverty Law Center—an organization which I’m sure you know has long worked to counter the Klan and other hate groups.

As I read your editorial, I was reminded of the “Pizzagate” situation a few years ago when media personalities falsely claimed that something nefarious was taking part in a local restaurant in Washington, DC, not far from my family’s home. In response to those false claims, an individual from another state came to DC with a gun—into the neighborhood where my wife and children and I shop and eat—seeking to do violence and possibly kill. I’m afraid that your editorial may prompt the same response. That is not acceptable.

The same amendment to the United States Constitution which guarantees me, as a preacher, the right to freedom of worship and freedom of the pulpit, also guarantees you as a journalist the right to freedom of the press. However, as I must use my pulpit responsibly, so too you must use your newspaper responsibly. Your recent editorial fell far short of living up to the public’s trust. You encouraged violence, you affirmed the work of a group of racial supremacists, and you appealed to the worst in human nature.

We can do better. We must do better! That is why I am making a modest contribution in your name to the Southern Poverty Law Center. And that is why I affirm, again, that you, despite our differences, are a child of God.

Certainly it is okay to disagree on tax policy or the use of the military or other legislative matters that allude to you in your editorial. However, civility, respect, wisdom, temperance, decency, and dialogue must be employed to call us to the better angels of our nature.

As a resident of the DC area, I am privileged to know and be friends with elected officials, government employees, lobbyists, and many hardworking people of various partisan leanings. They are my neighbors. They are our fellow citizens. As the pastor of a church in the DC area, I am grateful for the Democrats, Republicans, federal employees, liberals and conservatives who sing in the choir, teach Sunday School, serve on committees, visit shut-ins and seek to follow Jesus as part of this congregation. I reject your call for the Klan to rise up and clean out the place I call home.

Some may point out that your failing and prejudices comes from the fact that you are the editor of a small town paper in the South. I was born and reared in a small Southern town; I reject those characterizations.

There is racism and racial supremacy in large cities and all across the country. It is all wrong, all sinful.

Growing up in a small town in the South, I learned tolerance and love. Those traits exist in your town. You have the opportunity to nurture those traits.

I do not claim to be perfect. I admit my own shortcomings and racial biases. I am grateful for the grace of God that calls beyond my imperfections to places of growth and repentance.

I can't help but think there is something in you that feels unloved and unheard and unappreciated. So I say again, with words I find hard to say, that you are loved. You are a child of God. You can live into that holiness. I commit to you, sir, my prayers for your wellbeing and my very best wishes our common national life together.

May the peace of God fill our lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Tutt", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Timothy Tutt
Senior Minister