

# Milton gathering honors 5th anniversary of George Floyd's death

By [Rita Chandler](#) Globe Correspondent, Updated May 22, 2025, 8:16 p.m.



Reverend Zenetta Armstrong from Church of the Holy Spirit in Mattapan sang during the 5th Annual Rally for George Floyd on the 5th anniversary of his death at the Parkway United Methodist Church on May 22, 2025. MATTHEW J. LEE

MILTON — Despite the harsh wind and rain of a rare spring nor'easter, over 50 people gathered at Parkway Methodist Church Thursday evening to mark the fifth anniversary of George Floyd's death.

In a small hall adjacent to the sanctuary, activists, community and religious leaders, and residents sang, shared a meal, and reflected on his death.

"It's an important statement that we can make that we as a church — as a community of faith — stand for those things: diversity, inclusion, and racial justice," said Tom Getchell-Lacey, the church pastor.

Floyd was killed on May 25, 2020, by Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin. Floyd had been arrested for allegedly passing a \$20 counterfeit bill to buy a pack of cigarettes.

Chauvin pressed his knee into Floyd's neck and back for over nine minutes while Floyd pleaded, "I can't breathe," and called out for his mother.

At one point Thursday, the entire room knelt in silence for nine minutes and 29 seconds — the same length of time Chauvin's knee remained on Floyd's neck.

"Racial profiling has been happening to Black people for years," said Ron Bell, a co-organizer of the event. "But in light of recent profilings and attacks on immigrants and other groups gatherings like this are vital in order to keep our joy . . . to make sure we put boots on the ground and get people informed."

Bell held up a small Black Book which outlines civil, voting, and immigration rights. "And to get them to vote," he added.

Floyd's shocking death was captured on video that went viral, sparking global protests

around the world against racial profiling and police brutality.

In Massachusetts, people marched through Boston, defying COVID-19 restrictions against large public gatherings.

Attendees on Thursday recommitted to working for justice in Floyd's name.

"We did a huge standout in 2020, when the tragedy happened, and over 3,000 people came out ... and we did a march on the first anniversary in 2021, which is similar to what we had planned for today," said Karen Groce-Horan, founder of Courageous Conversations Toward Racial Justice, based in Milton.

"There are times when you have to show up," said Rabbi Alfred Benjamin of Temple Beth Shalom of the Blue Hills. "When there's a community that's hurting, they need to know that they're not alone. And my community knows what it's like to be alone, and afraid."

People gathered at the Parkway United Methodist Church and were led in song by the church's music director Brother Dennis Slaughter during the 5th Annual Rally for George Floyd, held indoors because of a nor'easter. MATTHEW J. LEE

Groce-Horan noted that Thursday's anniversary rally had initially been planned to march to Mattapan, but the weather forced people indoors.

There is a need for rallies and protests in which Black people feel safe and represented, she said.

"I've gone out to marches, and [often] the crowds are very white, and often it's not comfortable for people of color and Black and brown bodies to be out in those spaces. So create the space ... and create the movement."

The rally included music from the newly formed protest chorus [BVOCAL](#), and call-

and-response chants of “I am one. I cannot do everything. But I can do something, and what I can do, I ought to do.”

Placards lined the room, displaying the names, ages, and dates of the deaths of Black individuals killed by police — including the 40 youngest victims in 2024, according to Louis Pierro, 74, of the organization Milton for Peace.

“Since George, [the numbers] have not gone down, and in some cases they have risen,” Pierro said. “So it’s necessary to draw attention to this. To keep people aware that the violence is still happening.”

Many of the signs were created by 7-year-old Talin Steffenoni. “My mom, she told me about everything, and I wanted to help,” Talin said.

Brother Dennis Slaughter led during the singing of “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” MATTHEW J. LEE

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Rita Chandler can be reached at [rita.chandler@globe.com](mailto:rita.chandler@globe.com).

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