



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP  
NEW JERSEY SYNOD  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
*God's work. Our hands.*  
1930 Highway 33, Hamilton Square, NJ 08690

January 8, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

As you prepare for Sunday worship and the celebration of the Baptism of Our Lord, I know you do so with the events of this past week hanging over you. Know that the Holy Spirit is present with you in your preparations, in your leading, and in your worshiping.

So many words have already been written about the shameful display on Wednesday of white supremacy, Christian nationalism, and violence, that I hesitate to add more. Disturbing images of fellow citizens carrying crosses alongside confederate flags while storming the capitol building have caused us to stop and reflect on who we are as a country and as people of God living in this country.

As a synod, we have consistently and repeatedly denounced words and actions that contribute to racial prejudice, injustice, or the use of violence as a tool for political change, regardless of where those words or actions come from. We have a role to play in our civic life; we are called to engage in political discourse that works to make life better for the people who call this country home. But we cannot transfer the allegiance and loyalty which rightly belongs to Jesus Christ to any political leader or ideology.

I invite you to recommit to living out the promises we make when affirming our baptism: to live among God's faithful people; to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper; to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed; to serve all people following the example of Jesus; and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

And finally, pray for the peace of Christ that will, in fact, usher in the day when there is justice for all.

*Eternal God, amid all the turmoil and changes of the world your love is steadfast and your strength never fails. In this time of danger and trouble, be to us a sure guardian and rock of defense. Guide the leaders of our nation with your wisdom, comfort those in distress, and grant us courage and hope to face the future; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW additional prayers)*

Thank you for being in this ministry together,

Bishop Tracie L. Bartholomew