



**OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**  
NEW JERSEY SYNOD  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
*God's work. Our hands.*

November 14, 2016

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Almost one week ago, Donald Trump was elected to serve as the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. For some, this was the hoped for result of a contentious election season. For others, this was a time of great disappointment. Many sociologists, political pundits, psychologists, and religious writers have analyzed the results of the voting and have tried to give answers as to why people voted the way they did. At this point, I am tired of reading and re-reading such analyses.

I am concerned, however, that the results of this election have emboldened people of ill will. In this past week we have seen incidents of racial hatred escalate. We have seen graffiti spray-painted on bathroom walls in a high school denouncing LGBTQ students, swastikas covering the front windows of storefronts, signs declaring “Trump Nation. Whites Only”, and more. I have received phone calls and emails from pastors whose parishioners are afraid to go out to work and parents whose children are afraid to go to school.

Regardless of who you or your parishioners voted for, we all must denounce this behavior. As the body of Christ, we are called to stand with those whom God loves and claims as God’s own cherished children. We are called to speak out when we witness acts of hatred. We are charged to eradicate racism in all its forms, welcome the refugee and immigrant, and work for justice and peace in all the earth. There is no place for bigotry in our church.

On November 14, 1960, this country watched as 6-year-old Ruby Bridges made her way to the William Franz Elementary School in New Orleans, Louisiana. White parents pulled their children out of the school and teachers refused to teach as long as there was a black student in the classroom. Adult men and women hurled hate-filled words at a little girl trying to get an education. Ruby spent the first day in the principal’s office because of the chaos that surrounded her attendance at the all-white school. On the second day, a Methodist minister brought his white daughter to school and broke the boycott. Slowly, students began to return to the school, even if they didn’t fully embrace their new reality.

Today, on November 14, 2016, my heart breaks to hear stories that sound similar to those which happened 56 years ago. Post-election, there are some who feel that their anti-immigrant, misogynistic, racist comments have been normalized or legitimized. We need to risk our own safety in order to step up and tell them they are wrong. We need to examine our own prejudices and biases and confess our own sinfulness. By our actions, we will witness to the truth as expressed by Bishop Desmond Tutu: "Goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate; light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death".

Thank you for your part in proclaiming the Gospel. Please know that I am here to support you and pray for you every day. Together we can be the church that Christ calls us to be for the sake of the world.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tracie L. Bartholomew".

Bishop Tracie L. Bartholomew