



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

November 13, 2024*

Dear Friends in Christ,

One week ago, Donald Trump was elected to serve as the 47th 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. Text messages were sent to Black people telling them they were “selected to pick cotton at the nearest plantation”. We have seen calls to LGBTQ crisis hot lines increase (The Trevor Project alone reported an increase of 700%). Promises of mass deportations and workplace raids have raised the anxiety in our immigrant communities. I have received phone calls and emails from pastors whose parishioners are afraid to go to work and parents whose children are afraid to go to school.

Regardless of who you or your fellow parishioners voted for, we all must denounce hate speech and the demonization of our neighbors. 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, my heart breaks to hear stories that sound similar to those which happened 64 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. 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". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Bishop Tracie L. Bartholomew

*much of this letter is copied from what I wrote on November 14, 2016