



Metropolitan New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Siblings in Christ:

These are overwhelming times.

We see the continuation of horrific violence in Minneapolis. Immigrants are harassed on the street by ICE agents, neighbors are kidnapped by people wearing masks, in unmarked cars and driven away. Many are afraid to leave their homes. Last week, ICE officers detained a five-year-old child, Liam Ramos, and used him as bait to lure his family members out of their home. On Saturday, federal agents fatally shot ICU nurse Alex Patti as he attempted to administer aid to a protester, following the killing of Renee Good earlier this month.

Feelings of anger, dread, and despondency live among so many of us. How could they not? But to acquiesce to hopelessness is not our call. These events must catalyze us to be the Body of Christ together, to renew our call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.

This past Sunday, we read together from the book of Matthew. After hearing that John has been put in prison, Jesus leaves Nazareth, taking up residence in Capernaum, and he begins to preach: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God has come near.”

To our 21st-century, English-speaking ears, “repent” sounds like a call to atone for our wrongdoing. But in the original Greek of this passage, we read the word metanoia, which calls us to turn around and change our hearts and minds.

Jesus calls us, the body of Christ, to change our hearts and minds, and through that change, also change our world. We are called to be part of the work of making “Thy Kingdom come, on earth.”

We will stand together as a community of faith to oppose injustice wherever we see it. It has been inspiring to see photographs of faith leaders and everyday people, bundled up against the frigid Minnesota cold, standing up and making their voices heard, protecting their neighbors. Closer to home in Metro New York, we see people gathering for vigils, accompanying their neighbors to immigration court appointments, and mobilizing their neighborhoods to respond to ICE raids across the five boroughs, Long Island, and the Hudson Valley.

I hope you will join me in taking action:

- Show up for each other. Organize and participate in demonstrations in your community that promote justice and peace. Many of our churches have organized vigils and sit-ins, or assembled contingents to attend marches and rallies together.
- Show up for your elected officials. Call your senators to demand that they stop further funding for ICE by rejecting a bill already passed by the House. Call all your Congressional representatives and demand the immediate deescalation removal of ICE in Minneapolis and all our cities.
- Show up in prayer for our siblings, who — out of fear of detainment, deportation, or worse — cannot join us in person. Theirs is the kingdom of God.

May this painful moment serve as a catalyst for a new world built on justice.

Signed,
Bishop Katrina Foster