

From pastors in our region...

This is our response as leaders of faith communities to the heightened bigotry we have witnessed in our communities and across the nation. As pastors of the ELCA in Northern New Jersey, we will stand together so that "all may flourish." Please read.

In the days following this presidential election, we are saddened by reports of increased vandalism, threats, and intimidation, some of an explicitly racist nature, throughout the country. Several news outlets, including the Southern Poverty Law Center, have reported a surge in such incidents, which have been directed mainly at Muslims, Jews, black and Latino people. The FBI recently reported that such incidents have been on the rise already in 2015, and that attacks on Muslims have seen the sharpest increase in frequency.

As Christian leaders, we find this both reprehensible and unacceptable. We are inspired by our Christian faith in a God who becomes incarnate and moves closer to us to save us, despite our flaws and sin, and thus frees us to move closer to others in fellowship and solidarity. We appreciate the support of our Synodical Bishop, The Rev. Tracie Bartholomew, who has instructed us that, "[r]egardless 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 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." (letter dated Nov. 14, 2016)

Thus we, the undersigned pastors of Lutheran churches of the ELCA, serving or supporting congregations in Bergen, Passaic, and Essex counties, want to assure all people in our communities, regardless of race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity, that we will seek to preserve and protect their rights and dignity, and promise to work for the end of systemic racism and discrimination. All people, but especially those who feel powerless or the targets of bigotry or scapegoating, should be treated fairly and with human decency, and as an enlightened community, we should all strive to address their needs so that together, we all may flourish.

Signed:

The Rev. Wendy Abrahamson, Wayne  
The Rev. Hayley Bang, Paramus  
The Rev. Bruce Bassett, Glen Rock  
The Rev. Arnd Braun-Storck, Elizabeth  
Chaplain Abby Ferjak, Ridgewood  
The Rev. Maristella Freiburg, Newark  
The Rev. Peggy Hayes, Dumont  
The Rev. Julie Haspel, Oakland  
The Rev. Lisa Holliday, New Milford  
The Rev. Michael Linderman, Ramsey  
The Rev. Jenny McLellan, Allendale  
The Rev. Will Moser, Montclair  
The Rev. Peggy Niederer, Wyckoff  
The Rev. Scott Schantzenbach, Oxford  
The Rev. Beate Storck, Tenefly  
The Rev. Marc Stutzel, Woodcliff Lake  
The Rev. Steven Sweet, River Edge  
The Rev. Ignaki Unzaga, Passaic