



Lutheran Church of the Resurrection

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Pastoral Letter In the Midst of Civil Distress

**“Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.
If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”**

Romans 12.17-8

Like many of you I make it a habit to lift up our nation and its leaders in prayer. I do so in confidence that good government is a gift from God and the means by which the love of neighbor can be made manifest through our laws, policies, and combined efforts. On January 6th, a day on which Christians celebrate the Epiphany (the season of light), our nation seemed to be thrown into a deep darkness where our capital became a place of bloodshed and violence. It was a sad day, not only because of the loss of life; but because it seemed to represent a breakdown in the civic bonds that bind us together as Americans. A nation which has celebrated E Pluribus Unum (out of the many, one) was experiencing a fracture in that aspiration rarely seen on our shores. So how do we respond as people of faith? How do we move forward when even our closest family and friends may have a different perspective on such events and their underlying cause? Do we have a voice to offer in the midst of political and societal tension?

I believe Paul’s words from his letter to the Romans, cited above, offer us a ‘faithful/faith-filled’ road map for the days, weeks and months to come. First and foremost, as enticing as it may be, we are not to repay evil for evil. The answer does not lie in demonizing those with whom we disagree or resorting to acts of violence whether they are physical, verbal or emotional. I encourage you to resist the old Adam/Eve within that favors such a response and instead, cling to our Lord who calls for us to love, even as he has loved us (John 13.34). Paul then reminds us that when it comes to our behavior, we are to strive to live peaceably with one another. When it comes to times of conflict, we are to be the peacemakers, not the antagonists. I encourage you to resist posting, participating or promulgating words and sentiments that cause harm to others, their reputation, or their standing as fellow Americans. This does not mean that we have to agree with one another, nor that we can’t have healthy and vigorous debate; but it means that there is a line that followers of Jesus will not cross.

In the meantime, we rest in the confidence that God is sovereign and continues to give us opportunities to let our light shine and to work together for the common good. We rejoice that women and men of good conscience can use such a time of national crisis to find ways to bring about healing. And we stand unswervingly in prayer for our nation, our leaders, and even with those with whom we disagree; trusting that God will guide us through such darkness with the light of Jesus Christ.

Peace! Pastor Jeff Frohner



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