



Upstate New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

June 30, 2022

Dear Beloved Church,

Luke writes in this Sunday's (RCL) Gospel reading that Jesus appointed seventy followers and sent them out into the world "ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go" (Luke 10:1, NRSV). Jesus sent them out equipped with words of peace, encouragement to build relationships, the power to heal, and the proclamation of God's abiding presence.

Jesus still sends the church into the world today to proclaim peace, to sit with those who are suffering, to provide healing through the gifts of God's people, to be engaged with the world, and to proclaim God's presence in public places. Therefore, we as a public church respond and give witness to the impact public policies, legislation, and litigation make on the lives of our neighbor. Loving our neighbor means speaking with and advocating on behalf of those directly impacted by the recent decisions of the supreme court of the United States.

As Christians following the Way of the Cross through a Lutheran lens, we believe that all people are created equally in the image of God, and that we are interconnected, relational beings, with the Divine and with one another. As Lutherans, "we recognize that acting justly within family, church, and society for the common good is central to the vocation which God calls all people." (Social Statement: Faith, Sexism, & Justice).

I commend to you the attached letter carefully written by our Gender Justice Task Force as it relates to the recent decisions of the United States Supreme Court. This letter may be used to further discussion in your own communities in addition to resources available on the Gender Justice page of our website.

As Lutherans, we can approach the discussion of reproductive rights without conforming to the dominant culture's demand to divide people between binary choices. The matter of a person's reproductive rights is a matter between a person and their doctor and made for the sake of the person. A person is free to decide for themselves concerning their own physical health and well-being, and as Christians, we are set free to love our neighbor in a way that supports their rights to health and medical care in addition to human rights such as access to safe shelter, food and water security, and civil rights like access to quality education, economic opportunity, and the liberty to love and marry without legislative restriction.

I commend to you the work and resources of our Gender Justice and Racial Justice Task Forces, the Social Statements of our church together, the ELCA, available at

elca.org/socialstatements and our churchwide Call to Action, Faith: Sexism, and Justice, available at elca.org/womenandjustice.

The Rev. Imani Olear, DEM and I will be hosting upcoming zoom events for rostered leaders and lay people to further discuss these important issues and share in how we may cultivate generous love during this time. God has called us to be the church for just such a time as this. May God's love activate you and your faith community in justice and joy, for the sake of the world.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lee M. Miller II".

Bishop Lee Miller II

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