



Upstate New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

March 29, 2023

Dear Church,

From the first creation story in Genesis we hear that God, Creator, forms humans in the their own image. "God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, in our likeness'" (Gen.1:26). And it was so. The psalmists' language for the image of God comes from the Hebrew word, "hesed", translated, lovingkindness. The psalms speak again and again of this *hesed* God, One who is lovingkindness.

Our ELCA social statement, "Faith, Sexism and Justice" states that, "all people are created equally in the image of God" (pg. 15). Therefore, each person, all people, are formed, created, in the image of lovingkindness. Every person is created with value, dignity, and love.

The Scriptures are clear that the God who justifies is the same God who insists that 'justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream' (Amos 5:24). The ELCA affirms that God's Law, in its civil use, permeates and undergirds basic structures of human society to support life and protect all people in a world that remains under the sway of sin. God works through shared human endeavor and intends that all people work together to deter evil and seek justice (Faith, Sexism and Justice. P. 59).

Jesus is shown throughout the gospels to offer love, respect, and dignity to every person he encountered, calling those who might follow him to love others, and to love our neighbors. Striving for justice and peace is what neighbor-love looks like.

I am deeply troubled by the bills being introduced in state legislative bodies across the country which target our LGBTQIA2S+ siblings, specifically impacting access to health care, parental rights, access to sports programs, and, still, public restrooms. Many of the legislative bills specifically impact young people, including members of our church body. These bills put the lives and wellbeing of young people at risk.

Cultivating a GRACE Mindset: Generous Love

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As an ordained pastor with this Upstate New York Synod, called to “speak justice on behalf of the poor and oppressed,” I join the voices of many others who call on our public officials to oppose discriminatory legislation and ensure just equity for all. I support our transgender siblings and their parents in seeking just and equitable access to medical care and the security of civil and human rights. Furthermore, I actively support the passage of non-discrimination laws for states and municipalities as a proactive step in securing a safe, just, and equitable community for our LGBTQIA2S+ siblings.

This Friday, March 31, 2023, let us mark International Transgender Day of Visibility listening to the voices of our siblings as they share the impact of harmful legislation on their lives, and join them in the movement of liberation.

The Upstate New York Synod is a Reconciling in Christ synod. We have covenanted together to “stand against all forms of homophobia, transphobia, racism, white supremacy, and other discriminatory practices as we work together in anticipation of God’s reign breaking into this world” (UNYS Welcome Statement). Thank you for your participation and partnership in this welcome, rooted in the generous love of God, the One who has created us in the image of heseed. Together, we dream a church where this same loving-kindness activates us for justice and joy.

Yours in Christ,



Bishop Lee M. Miller II

Resources:

Lutheran Guide to Advocate for LGBTQIA+ People in Church and Society
<https://www.reconcilingworks.org/resources/justice/advocate/>

Living Lutheran LGBTQ Voices (videos) and statements from Bishop Eaton
<https://www.livinglutheran.org/tag/lgbtq/>

National Center for Transgender Equality
<https://transequality.org/voices-for-trans-equality>

