

Dear sisters and brothers of the West Virginia- Western Maryland Synod,
Pentecost 2020

Along with you we have watched with sadness and anger the events unfolding around our country in the aftermath of the most recent deaths of African American men at the hands of both police and armed civilians in Minneapolis and Georgia respectively. We write to affirm our commitments as the baptized people of God in this place we call home that racism has no place in our congregations or communities in which we live. Our baptismal calling demands love of neighbor even as the Commandments require that we help and protect our neighbor. What we have witnessed in the last several weeks lays bare, yet again, a brokenness that is of the deepest kind.

We call upon one another to pray:

For justice to be done through the legal channels for Ahmaud Aubrey and George Floyd.

For the peace of Christ to surround their families during this very public time of grief.

For the safety of law enforcement – local and state police, national guard and emergency providers – during these times of public unrest.

For local community leaders who are trying to lead peaceful protest that their voices would be heard above those who would harm their neighbors and destroy their livelihoods.

For our congregations in Minneapolis, Atlanta and other urban centers in the midst of unrest that their witness of presence provides a sign of hope and vision amid these challenging days.

We challenge one another to act:

We are the Body of Christ in these mountains and hills. We condemn any type of white supremacy in our communities. We must all be leaders in our communities to foster dialogue, encourage understanding, stand in the “gap” when necessary as people of peace who are still people of justice. It is a tall order in these times of divisive rhetoric but it is what makes us distinct as people of the crucified and risen Lord. While each context of our congregations is unique there is work to be done in our cities, towns and rural areas to continue to work actively against racism in its blatant and more subtle forms. We, as your pastors, make these commitments and pray that you will have already begun this work.

In Christ,

Rev. Linda Muhly, Pastor, St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, Clarksburg WV

Rev. Joel E. Richter, Pastor, Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wheeling, WV

Rev. Randolph Richardson, Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Charleston WV

Rev. Sally Bartling, Trinity Lutheran Church, Keyser, WV
Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Westernport,

Rev. Deborah L. Gable, Pastor, St James Evangelical Church, Wheeling WV

Rev. Sean Smith Messiah Lutheran Church - Moundsville, WV
 Good Shepherd Lutheran Church - New Martinsville, WV
 Trinity Lutheran Church - Wheeling, WV
 St. Matthew Lutheran Church - Benwood, WV

The Rev. Matthew A. Day St. John's Lutheran Church Martinsburg, WV

Rev. Karen Erskine Valentine Shepherdstown Lutheran Parish, WV
 St Peter's Lutheran Church, St James Lutheran Church

Rev. Ralph W. Dunkin, Bishop Emeritus, West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod

Rev. Casey Lieneman, The Church of the Covenant in Grafton.

The Rev. Tony Setley, Obl. OP Lutheran Campus Ministry at WVU Morgantown, WV

Reverend Emilie E. Theobald-Rowlands, Christ Lutheran Church, Vienna WV

Rev. Ian Reid, First Lutheran Parkersburg WV

Rev. Diane L. Day, St. Thomas, Charles Town, WV

Rev. Christine Olson, Trinity, Arden/Martinsburg, WV

Rev. Daniel W.E. Warntz, Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church Petersburg, WV

The Rev. Jason N. Felici, Pastor, Mountain Lutheran Parish; Director, Camp Luther

Rev. Jessica L. Felici Calvary Lutheran Church, Brandywine, WV
 Faith Lutheran Church, Franklin, WV
 Mt. Hope Lutheran Church, Upper Tract, WV
 New Hope Lutheran Church, Minnehaha Springs, WV
 St. John Lutheran Church, Moyers, WV

Rev. Patrice Weirick, Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, New Haven, WV

Rev. Michael R. Wright, St. John's Lutheran Church - Red House, MD,
 St. Paul's Lutheran Church - Aurora, WV

Rev. Kevin L Mackey, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Huntington WV

Rev. Sherri Schafer, Director of Evangelical Mission WV-W MD Synod
 Executive Director Community Lutheran Partners

Rev. Paul Schafer, St. Mark Lutheran Church, Wheeling WV

Rev. Jim Wicker, Pastor, Cross of Grace Lutheran Church, Hurricane WV

Rev. Ruth Bullwinkle St John's Lutheran Church, Davis, WV

The Reverend John R. Unger II [St. John's Lutheran Church, Harpers Ferry WV](#)
Camp Hill - Wesley United Methodist Church, Harpers Ferry,
St. John's Episcopal Church, Harpers Ferry, WV

Rev. Jacqueline Campbell, Retired, Fairmont, WV

Pastor Andrea Ernest, Holy Trinity Memorial Lutheran Church, Sharpsburg, MD

Gary Koontz, Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church Baker, WV

Pastor Carl Ames, Christ the King Lutheran, Huntington WV

The Rev. Susan Claytor, St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church, Beckley, WV

Rev. William C Ridenhour First English Lutheran Church, Wheeling, WV

Rev. Erik Nielsen, St. Johannes, New Milton WV

Rev. Michael L. Heckathorn Trinity Lutheran Church, Weirton WV
Grace, Stuebenville, Ohio

Rev. Scott Robinson, Pastor, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Oakland MD

Rev. Alvin Schafer, retired

The Rev. Keith Pittsnogle, Wardensville WV, retired

The Rev. Patricia Pittsnogle, Wardensville WV, retired

Rev. Sharon Van Dam, St. Stephens Episcopal Church, East Liverpool, Ohio