



**North/West Lower Michigan Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

November 4, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

Peace be with you!

The day after the 2016 presidential election, I found myself sitting in various airports as I traveled to meet our Latin American partners in Peru. The feelings of uncertainty and anxiety radiated from those I encountered both inside and outside of the U.S. Today, the day after the 2020 election day, we are again faced with feelings of uncertainty and anxiety as votes continue to be counted and we await official word on the result. This election season has been unlike anything our country has experienced. We have been overwhelmed with political attacks, misinformation, and a sense of insecurity. We have seen the divisions in our country, state, communities, and churches become more pronounced and, here in Michigan, we are acutely aware of how deep these divisions run.

As we experience what can seem like insurmountable separation, I am reminded that we, as Christians, are a reconciling people: God “reconcil[ed] us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation...we therefore are Christ’s ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). We have been given this charge as people of faith and citizens of Christ and no matter the outcome of this election, we will need to continue our work of reconciling, of addressing the deep divisions in our communities, and of fighting for justice and equality.

In contemplating how we continue this work, I return to the words of Martin Luther. In his explanation of the Eighth Commandment, “You shall not bear false witness”, Luther writes: “No one shall use the tongue to harm a neighbor, whether friend or foe.” Luther continues to explain: “Our chief reason for doing this is the [commandment] that Christ has given in the gospel and in which he means to encompass all the commandments concerning our neighbor, ‘In everything do to others as you would have them do to you’ (Matt. 7:12).” Our nation is divided and as we interact with our neighbors in the coming days, weeks, and years, we must be mindful of how Jesus call us to act.

I am also particularly reminded of a passage in First Timothy that urges us to hold everyone, including our leaders, in prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Luther touches on this in his explanation of the Lord’s Prayer, writing: “Indeed, the greatest need of all is to pray for the civil authorities and the government, for it is chiefly through them that God provides us daily bread and all the comforts of this life. Although we have received from God all good things in abundance, we cannot retain any of them or enjoy them in security and happiness were God not to give us a stable, peaceful government. For where dissension, strife, and war prevail, there daily bread is already taken away or reduced.” I invite you to join me in praying for all of our leaders, including those in our government, our Church, and our communities.

Finally, in our fight for justice and equality, we are to stand with “the least of these.” As explained in Matthew’s Gospel, when Jesus comes in glory, he will judge according to whether we fed the hungry, gave the thirsty something to drink, clothed the naked, welcomed strangers, and visited those in prison (Matthew 25:31-46; 28:18-20). In his explanation of the Fifth Commandment, “You shall not kill”, Luther expands on this sentiment, writing: “If you send a naked person away when you could have clothed him, you have let him freeze to death. If you see anyone suffering from hunger and do not feed her, you have let her starve...it will be of no help for you to use the excuse that you did not assist in their deaths by word or deed, for you have withheld your love from them and robbed them of the kindness by means of which their lives might have been saved.” As Christians, we are called to fight injustice, to help those in need, and to continue our work to love our neighbors as ourselves.

As we continue forward in this time of uncertainty, we trust that God is here waiting with us. In this and every election, we believe in the good news that, as governments rise and fall, the reign of Christ is eternal. Christ intends to reign in our nation and in the world, as well as in our church and in our hearts. We will continue to gather around Jesus, to dig deeply into scripture, and to name and claim the values of Jesus.

Peace,  
The Rev. Craig Alan Satterlee, Ph.D., Bishop