



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
HARRISBURG AREA – SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE

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*“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it...
The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.”
(John 1:5 & 9)*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace to you in the name of Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, Healer of our Brokenness, and Hope of the World!

On Wednesday, January 6, the Christian church around the world observed Epiphany. On this day we celebrate the manifestation of Jesus to the gentiles, as represented by the three magi who followed the light of a star to find the infant Jesus lying in a manger. Christ is the light that we follow as well. Indeed, Jesus Christ came as the light of the world.

Tragically, this Wednesday, instead of light, a darkness fell across our nation. An unimaginable threat and attack to the very foundation of our country was displayed at the US Capitol in the eyes of the world. The incited mob violent and deadly invasion into the protected space of Congress was a direct assault on the very core of our national identity as a democratic country. To say we were concerned and troubled would be an understatement. The whole world, not only our nation, was in shock and horror by what unfolded. The Capitol Building has not been breached since the British did so in 1814. This day will be remembered as one of the darkest moments in US history.

In times of darkness such as this, we must urgently seek the light of Christ and reflect it into the world.

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, where this unbelievable and deplorable mob-raid took place, wrote an honest and inspiring letter. She calls us to courageous discipleship: “Followers of Jesus Christ must prophetically embody, in word and deed, the precepts, practices and promises of the Gospel message. It is a message of love, but a love that speaks truth and stands against immorality.” Further, she says that Christ’s disciples must “truly claim what Abraham Lincoln called ‘the better angels of our nature,’ seeking to discern how to rebuild our nation and nurture the restoration that God demands. In this light, we continue to pray for and support the peaceful transfer of power that is a hallmark of the democratic process.”

Our democracy is a gift to which other nations aspire. We all must do our part to protect and preserve the core values, principles and practices of democracy so that our nation will continue to be a beacon of hope for the free world.

As our nation is going through this dark time of national and Constitutional crisis, I call all the people and churches in our Susquehanna Conference to join in prayer for a peaceful transition and the healing of our deeply divided nation. Bishop Easterling reminds us, “As a church, we are called to profound and fervent prayer—prayer that will shake foundations and usher in a new age; prayer that will transform hearts and a nation; prayer that reminds us of what Christ has called us to be beyond partisan divides.”

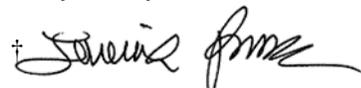
Pray that we, as a nation, will bridge the divide and live together in peace. Jesus said that a kingdom or house divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:24-25). We may have differences in our understandings, opinions, ideas, and even in our political convictions. But as citizens of one nation, we may be opponents, but ought not be enemies against one another. Pray that we cast the light of truth, trust, compassion, humility, and repentance that chases out the darkness of fear, hatred, violence, untruth, and arrogance. Pray that we heal, not harm. Pray that throughout our communities and land we will seek to build up and not tear down.

“God of all ages, in your sight nations rise and fall, and pass through times of peril. Now when our land is troubled, be near to judge and save. May leaders be led by your wisdom; may they search your will and see it clearly. If we have turned from your way, reverse our ways and help us to repent. Give us your light and your truth, let them guide us; through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of this world, and our Savior. Amen” (“A Prayer in a Time of National Crisis,” United Methodist Book of Worship, 517).

“Look graciously, O Lord, upon this land. Where it is in pride, subdue it. Where it is in need, supply it. Where it is in error, rectify it. Where it is in default, restore it. And where it holds to that which is just and compassionate, support it.” (United Methodist Book of Worship, 516).

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Prayerfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremiah Park", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

Jeremiah Park