

A Way Forward in Anxious and Angry Times

This is a time of deep divisions in our nation, within churches and the Presbytery. In light of the rise of racial and ethnic hate crimes since last November, we fear for the safety of fellow church members and others who are Hispanic, African-American, immigrants, gay, lesbian, transgender, disabled, and women. As members of the Albany Presbytery Peacemaking Task Force we encourage our brothers and sisters in faith to face this time. The New Testament calls attention to the *kairos* moment (Mark 1:15) , not just a passing incident that will come and go, but **The Time**, a critical period in which God calls for decisive belief and action.

We believe we face such a time now politically, socially, and ethically. It is not a wait and see time, it is not one of accommodation, it is not one of declaring peace when there is no peace. Now is the time to reclaim our belief that peacemaking is our calling, to stand firmly for justice for all people regardless of race, gender, or sexual preference, and to recommit ourselves to environmental justice in order to preserve God's order of creation for the future of our planet.

We call upon the church to manifest its faith by being a living witness to the Gospel in which Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all of your strength and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

It is in keeping with this teaching of our Lord when, on November 23, 2016, that the co-moderators of the General Assembly, Anderson and Edmiston, wrote the following:

"To our Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) family in Christ: This is our time to rally for the sake of the Gospel. What we mean is that – whatever your political allegiance – we are asking you to reaffirm your allegiance to the message of Jesus Christ who commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves and to

care for ‘the least of these. Our neighbors include refugees, undocumented workers, and the poor. Our neighbors include LGBTQ friends. Our neighbors include the unemployed and the underemployed. Our neighbors include victims of torture and brutality. This is a holy opportunity to be the people we were created to be.” (See <https://pres-outlook.org/2016/11/co-moderators-urge-presbyterians-agents-peace/>.) The Stated Clerk of the PC(USA) General Assembly wrote a communication on November 16, 2016 titled: “When incivility becomes the norm.” In that document he spoke to the core of the matter. “As Christians, we cannot accept a nation that normalizes violence, exclusion, and racism in our political rhetoric and public policy. We know that God has called us to create a world where a dignified life is available to all, and anything less offers no suitable worship.” (See <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2016/11/16/when-incivility-becomes-norm/>.)

As members of the Peacemaking Task Force of Albany Presbytery we recommend the following actions:

- That Albany Presbytery affirm, by voice vote, the above statements of our national leaders-and send them to the churches of our Presbytery to read, study and discuss various ways in which they may respond to the concerns of our day.

- That Presbytery encourage our churches and members to lift up in their prayers concerns for peace and justice.

- That the Presbytery make available a time and/or means for churches to share their thoughts and actions, so that we may all learn and benefit from each other and grow and serve together in discipleship and grace.

Respectfully submitted

The Peacemaking Task Force of Albany Presbytery.