

I would like to offer to the Presbytery some of the many things I have heard around our Presbytery community recently:

For some of us the events that have happened in rapid succession over the last month, building upon the last few years, have been a shattering of what we thought was true about the country we live in, the legal and even social/relational norms we thought would always be consistent.

For some of us, none of this is surprising, this is the country we have always known. These events have been building for all of our history as a country.

Some of us are mired in grief at what we see happening, some of us are inspired and grounded in our faith and what it means for us at a time like this.

Some of us are fearful and unsure of what the future will bring.

Some of us in the Church are ok with what is going on, and unbothered by it, even celebrate it.

Some of us are immigrants or naturalized U.S. citizens and are now carrying our passports or paperwork with us everywhere we go.

Some of us think it isn't as bad as others say it is.

Some of us have lived with the reality of race in this country our whole lives and have generational harm we contend with.

Some of us have never been fearful, because our skin color or social location has afforded us a type of normativeness we never have fully considered.

Some of us want conversations about what is going on to happen in the context of the ministries we are part of.

Some of us do not.

Some of us get angry at those who have these conversations and even threaten them.

Some of us have never protested before, and find ourselves out on the streets.

And some of us have deep experience in social movements and have much to offer and share.

Some of us feel like we can meet this moment in leadership and faithfulness.

And some of us are paralyzed, because the trauma of what is happening is triggering something deep inside of our souls and history.

Some of us have already left for other countries and are no longer part of this community of faith.

Others are making plans to leave if we are able.

Some of us in this community of faith have orders of deportation and do not know what to do, and have made plans for the care of our children if we are separated from them.

Some of us are afraid to preach and share what we really think, because we know our congregation will not accept it, and we cannot afford to lose our job.

Some of us think that this will all be over in November after the midterm elections.

Some of us are going about life like nothing is happening. Others cannot think of anything else.

How do we show up?

Dr. Leah Schade, a Lutheran pastor and seminary professor, has penned an excellent essay on Patheos about how to get ready for ICE in your community, [Guidance from Minnesota Clergy](#). I think it offers a lot of good information and reflection for everyone, whether or not you are a clergyperson. Take a read of this powerful article.

Our Lenten Journey

My theme for this year is *Nonviolence for Lent*. As I usually do, beginning on Ash Wednesday, I will offer a weekly meditation for the Presbytery. These will include a video resource and a short reflection on the lectionary texts. My goal is to deeply consider nonviolence as a powerful expression of discipleship. Over this season we will consider a “toolbox” of ways to practice nonviolence, grounded in the Way of Jesus.

Pastoral Communication to the Presbytery

Kate and I offered a pastoral communication to the Presbytery about two weeks ago. You can access it at [this link](#) if you did not see it when it was first sent. In it we share information from our national church office, statements and policy positions, and also some theological reflection for this time.

Our last paragraph reads:

There is no other affirmation we can make other than the core and unfailing principles of our faith - that all humans are created in the image of God - good and beloved, and that in God's kin-dom there are no borders. Jesus Christ is Lord, and it is the Way of Jesus we always will seek.

We invite the whole Presbytery to surround all of these things in prayer and solidarity - especially for those who have been disappeared, families who are living in fear and separation, children who have been traumatized and kidnapped, and communities who are in hiding. We pray for those visiting this violence upon other beloved children of God, that their hearts would be transformed and that any evil that is among us would be expelled.

We pray for God's peace to surround and sustain all of us.

Shannan