Dear friends,

I hope this letter finds you safe and warm. Like you, I have been holding in prayer those who needed to seek shelter from the literal and metaphorical storms we experienced this weekend. Though most in Durham kept power as the snow and ice storm came in more gently than expected, others in our country felt the brunt of a harsher storm and have had to find warmth in whatever ways they could. We give thanks to God for family, neighbors, and strangers around the country who have reached out to one another to offer shelter, food, firewood, heaters, and blankets to those without. May such generosity thrive.

There have been other storms brewing this weekend. Storms of the spirit – shock, anger, disbelief, sorrow, grief – as another U.S. citizen, Alex Pretti, was shot and killed in Minneapolis this weekend. We cried out in pain at the news that an ICU nurse in the midst of helping one in need was shot at point blank range, murdered by ICE agents. The reaction was swift and not limited to the people in the Minneapolis area. So many others, including many of you, are calling for non-violent responses, marching in the streets in freezing temperatures, calling their representatives, and demanding an end to the violence and fearmongering.

As Christians, we are called to stand with those in deepest need, with victims of injustice and oppression. Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis stated:

Jesus teaches us through Scripture to love our neighbors as ourselves, with no exceptions. We commit ourselves to the way of Christ—nonviolent and courageous love, especially toward those most at risk. We proclaim a God who values the full humanity and inherent dignity of all people. . . .

Rather than turn against one another, we turn toward community and proclaim God's love for all. We refuse to submit to the false power of chaos and terror. We refuse to hate, retreat, or to be divided. Rather than giving in to the forces seeking to undermine our sacred connections, we believe Jesus' example of loving all people must guide our journey together.

The Session of the church called for an end to the use of tactics of terror and to respect the human and constitutional rights of both citizens and non-citizens.

They committed to:
· Listen to the stories of those most vulnerable;
· Use our energy, intelligence, imagination, love, and resources to enact change born of partnership and accompaniment;
· Counter the rhetoric of hatred and fear;
· Engage honestly with those who hold different points of view by working to seek common ground; and
· Do all the above with mercy, kindness, and humility.

I invite us to join them in these commitments. Let us all, as the Office of Public Witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) says, "choose welcome over suspicion, truth over secrecy, and hope over fear."

Grace and peace to you all, friends.

Mindy