



Sierra Pacific Synod
Southwest California Synod
Pacifica Synod

September 10, 2025

Siblings on the way together,

We write to express our deepest appreciation for the important work of the LOPP Policy Council and for the leadership of Regina Banks the Director of the Lutheran Office of Public Policy around the recommendation for Proposition 50 on the ballot in California.

Our current and inherited documents and social statements are gifts and guides, yet they cannot anticipate every crisis. Amid grave threats to democratic self-government, these foundational principles—helpful as they are—may not speak with sufficient clarity to the peril before us.

Here Bonhoeffer is helpful in our own thinking about these things:

“Who stands firm? Only the one whose ultimate standard is not reason, principles, conscience, freedom, or virtue, but who is prepared to sacrifice all this.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, DBWE 8, “After Ten Years”).

“Responsible action must decide not simply between right and wrong, good and evil, but between right and right, wrong and wrong.” He adds, “this very fact defines responsible action as a free venture; it is not justified by any law.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, DBWE 6).

Bonhoeffer calls for “civil courage”—the willingness to take concrete responsibility in the present for the sake of coming generations.

The church’s social statements offer real guidance; yet they were not crafted for the specific collapse of democratic norms unfolding in places like Texas. So even where our guiding documents oppose gerrymandering in principle, responsible action may lead us to risk a different path for the sake of protecting the civic space where justice and dignity can still flourish.

There is a hard edge in Bonhoeffer's thought: even if the church has opposed gerrymandering in principle, in this crisis faith/conscience may lead us to depart from the letter of the social statements, because we bear a deeper responsibility to the future, to safeguard the conditions in which justice, representation, and human dignity remain possible.

Our ultimate grounding is not in documents of principles, but in Christ himself. Faith/Conscience, in this sense, is not rote repetition of inherited formulas but readiness for God's command/invitation in this hour:

"Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility."
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, DBWE 8; German: "Nicht der Gedanke, sondern die Verantwortungsbereitschaft ist der Ursprung der Tat.")

This is not disobedience to our tradition but rather obedience to Christ's living call. It is risky and subjective to be sure; but faithful. And it may be what Bonhoeffer sums up in *Discipleship*: "Only the one who believes is obedient, and only the one who is obedient believes." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship / The Cost of Discipleship*, DBWE 4).

Blessings and peace in discernment



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