

## CLERGY VIEW

# Not to speak is to speak

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**N**ot to speak is to speak." These words repeated in my mind as I read what I consider one of the most un-Christ-like Clergy View articles I have ever read in the Brainerd Dispatch. The article began by asking what Jesus would see in the world today and responds by saying Jesus would see sin and evil. I don't disagree with this initial statement; there is a lot of evil, and what we might refer to as sin, in the world today.

One doesn't need to turn on the news for long before stories of violence, starvation, oppression, corruption and destruction of the planet fill our ears.

But those are not the examples of "evil and sin" named in the article. Instead, the focus was entirely on the LGBTQ community, abortion care and nothing else. No mention of the 18 lives taken at the hands of school shooters during the 89 gun-related incidents at school just in the first three months of this year. Not a word about the fact nearly half of the unhoused people in Minnesota are youths. No, the entire focus of the article was on the "sin" of homosexuality, being transgender and obtaining an abortion.

After outlining these "sins," the article calls on churches and pastors to "tell people the truth" saying that "Not to speak is to speak." I couldn't agree more. But I vehemently disagree with the assessment of what the truth is and the nature of the evil this world is facing. Aware that this past Friday, March 31, was Transgender Day of Visibility, I feel compelled to speak out against the baldfaced lie that being transgender is a sin. I refuse to stay silent when scripture is taken out of context and manipulated to support the

false claim that being lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, or any sexual orientation other than heterosexual is somehow "unnatural." And I refuse to concede the Bible says anything definitive about when life begins; if anything, the scriptures make a case for life beginning at the first breath.

The truth is that when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment is, he replied plainly, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love God, love your neighbor, love yourself. Start with love. When in doubt, act and speak with love. The truth is that 82% of transgender individuals have considered killing themselves and 40% have engaged in suicidal behavior, with suicidality highest among transgender youth.<sup>2</sup> The truth is there are currently 424 anti-transgender bills making their way through legislatures in 47 different states including Minnesota — bills that would deny life-saving, gender-affirming care to thousands of young people, bills that seek to remove trans people from public life. These bills and rhetoric like that in last week's Clergy View, cause great harm and do not follow the example or the words of Christ. Not to speak is to speak, and so I am speaking, and I hope you will too.

To my transgender, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, queer beloveds, and to the 1 in 4 women (including trans-men) who have made or will make the difficult decision to terminate a pregnancy — I see you and I love you. More importantly, God sees you and calls you beloved. You are loved beyond measure and there is nothing you need to do or change about yourself to earn that love.