



The  
**EPISCOPAL CHURCH** *in*  
**CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA**

10/7/24

### **A word to God's faithful people in the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania**

Dear friends in Christ,

We write to you in a season of our nation's story where our collective life is fraught, and tensions are high. As we draw closer to the elections in November the vicious rhetoric, threats of violence, and feelings of anxiety in our country are mounting in their fervor. Many of us are frightened, dispirited or feel spiritually untethered.

How do we, as Christians, move through this mean time, in faith?

How do we follow Jesus and hold fast to the principles of our religious center that promote peace; seek justice for the least, the lonely and oppressed; and keep the love of neighbor as the premium by which we fashion our lives?

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul urges:

*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:9)*

Today, we encourage Episcopalians in Central Pennsylvania to hold fast to the practices of our tradition and to cling to God's strong and sustaining hand as we meet the challenges of this time with grace:

Be steadfast in prayer, asking for God's blessing and the power of the Spirit to give us courage and hope.

Be gentle in spirit, reaching out to those who need a good word, companionship, or compassion.

Be committed to a ministry of peacemaking, striving in our communications with others to find, despite our differences, some firm common ground upon which we can agree.

Be observant, noticing the places where people are marginalized, oppressed, or where you find unjust systems at work, speaking the truth in love to those in power.

Be faithful in worship, finding strength in the sacramental nurture of Christ's Eucharistic feast, comfort in the collective prayers of our tradition, inspiration to work for justice, and healing balm in community among the faithful.

These practices will keep us moving forward in the direction of God's reign of peace, justice and love. This work is not partisan; we are *all* called, by the gift and responsibility of our baptism, to respect the dignity of every person and to seek and serve Christ in each other. Our work as followers of Jesus, is to: "Come, labor on. Claim the high calling angels cannot share/to young and old, the gospel gladness bear." (*Ora Labora*, The Hymnal # 541). By doing these things- faithfully serving the practices of our tradition- God's transforming love will be made manifest among us.

As leaders in the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania, know of our deep affection and gratitude for you.

*Go forth into the world in peace; Be of good courage, hold fast that which is good, render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak, help the afflicted, honor all people, love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit...and the blessing of God: + Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you and remain with you, forever. Amen.*

+Audrey  
The Rt. Rev. Audrey C. Scanlan, Bishop

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For information on practices in civil discourse, please see this five-part curriculum offered through The Episcopal Church's Office of Government Relations, especially Lesson #2, Tenets for Civil Discourse [https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/07/ogr\\_civildiscoursecurriculum\\_full.pdf](https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/07/ogr_civildiscoursecurriculum_full.pdf)

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