

# A Confession for Such a Time as This

We, **young ministry leaders serving in the Synod of the Northeast PC(USA)**, who work in a diversity of contexts and minister to a diversity of people, declare that we are one Church, bound together in a law of love through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is one Spirit in whom we are baptized<sup>1</sup> and she makes no distinction in her people.<sup>2</sup> It is one Lord we praise: one Creator, one Redeemer, and one Sustainer, three in one, undivided; and as our Lord is one, so are we.

We call upon the Synod of the Northeast to take seriously the moral failings of this unique time which have plagued our national government and our Church. We urge the churches of the Synod of the Northeast:

- to confess our complicity in perpetuating systems of injustice and oppression
- to reject that which seeks to divide Christ's body
- to affirm all that makes for wholeness, unity, and justice
- to affirm our unity in Christ, as well as the very reality that we will not be one body until God's justice is made manifest for all.<sup>3</sup>

**We reject** the twin heresies of white supremacy and racism. Discrimination against any person based on physical attributes is a sin. Those who boldly march with raised arms and Confederate flags do so in opposition to the gospel of love our Lord Jesus lived.

**We confess** that we have, by our actions and inactions, helped to maintain the systems that perpetuate injustice against persons of color; that by holding fast to the belief in white supremacy, both consciously and unconsciously, individually and corporately, we have failed to be witnesses for Christ.

**We affirm** that God created all people unique and beloved in God's image.<sup>4</sup> Our cultural and ethnic diversity reflects our God in ways that no one tradition can fully encapsulate alone.<sup>5</sup> God transcends color, creed, and nation, and seeks to bring us all into God's love.

**We reject** the sin of gender discrimination. All efforts to curb the intrinsic rights of any person based on gender or sexual orientation is sin. We have neglected the fact that women, particularly women of color, and LGBTQI+ people are inordinately targeted for abuse and violence. God's preference for the oppressed has not been our preference, which is contrary to the gospel.

**We confess** that we have, by our actions and inactions, participated in violence against women, LGBTQI+ persons, and others by distancing their struggles, challenges, and concerns from our own,<sup>6</sup> thereby failing to show the love of Christ.

**We affirm** the diversity of our human makeup; that LGBTQI+ persons are whole and beloved people of God; that all efforts to shine the light of truth<sup>7</sup> on the realities of gender-based violence and abuse must be supported and promoted by God's people; that Jesus showed preference for those the world deemed non-conforming;<sup>8</sup> and that our love and support should be unwavering.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 3:11

<sup>2</sup> Romans 10:12

<sup>3</sup> Mark 3:24-25

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 1:27

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:12

<sup>6</sup> Ezekiel 16:49

<sup>7</sup> Luke 12:3

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 5:3-6; Mark 5:25-34

**We reject** the sin of xenophobia. A rhetoric of hate and violence against the alien and the foreigner are founded in fear and racism and is antithetical to the witness of scripture. We lament that our fractured world has created conditions which people must flee from all they know to seek safety and security.

**We confess** that we have, by our actions and inactions, turned away those deemed a risk to our security out of a selfish desire for our own safety; that our choices have led to the deaths of countless members of God's beloved community; that we have failed to extend Christ's hospitality; and that we have failed to be ambassadors for Christ<sup>9</sup> by loving the whole family of God.<sup>10</sup>

**We affirm** that we are to welcome in the stranger and give shelter to the alien, for the people of God were once aliens in the land of Egypt;<sup>11</sup> that we must work actively to open our arms to all people, regardless of where they come from or what they look like; and that a person need not assimilate the traits of the dominant culture in order to be considered a part of it.

**We reject** the greed of corporate capitalism as one of the chief purveyors of injustice in our nation. The lust for money and power has led to staggering financial inequality and a widening of the income gap between rich and poor. Corporate and shareholder profits have become more important than sustaining and nurturing life for all creation, and this is sin.

**We confess** that we have, by our actions and inactions, failed to be faithful stewards of God's very good creation.<sup>12</sup> We have allowed the desecration of our planet and the suffering of the world's poor for whom God has shown partiality. We have chosen to serve wealth and power over God.<sup>13</sup> Our failure to act on the issue of climate change and to hold accountable those whose greed has harmed the most vulnerable has proven the Church to be an unworthy midwife of the kingdom of God.<sup>14</sup>

**We affirm** the charge of the gospel, that to be considered great, we must humble ourselves and be servants of all;<sup>15</sup> that greed is incompatible with the social witness of Christ's Church;<sup>16</sup> that all efforts to curb exorbitant excess must be supported by the larger body of Christ in order to lift up the lowly and support those in need.<sup>17</sup>

**We reject** the marketing of fear as a tool of the powerful. Those who paint others as villains and themselves as heroes are charlatans and liars.<sup>18</sup> A culture of fear is irreconcilable with the gospel of hope we profess.

**We confess** that we have, by our actions and inactions, allowed fear to take root in our nation, our communities, our churches, and our souls; that we have not spoken up and out against the vilifying of the widow, the orphan, and the alien; that we have not proclaimed a gospel of hope based on the truth and justice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 5:43-47

<sup>11</sup> Exodus 22:21

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 1:31

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 6:24

<sup>14</sup> Romans 8:22

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 18:4, 23:12; James 4:6, 10

<sup>16</sup> Mark 10:45

<sup>17</sup> Luke 1:52

<sup>18</sup> Proverbs 17:4-5

**We affirm** that the gospel story is one of hope, rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ;<sup>19</sup> that we will not let fear dictate our response to God's call;<sup>20</sup> that when we stand in Christ we have nothing to fear;<sup>21</sup> that we are to be witnesses to the gospel even when it means putting our very lives at risk,<sup>22</sup> and that should we be called to lay down our lives for another -- regardless of that person's race, ethnicity, or faith -- we would do so joyfully,<sup>23</sup> trusting fully in the resurrection of our Lord.<sup>24</sup>

**We reject** the abuse of power in any form, no matter how it manifests, from systemic to individual. Those who lord their power over the powerless have engaged in sin that is rooted in pride and hubris and is contrary to the gospel.<sup>25</sup>

**We confess** that we have, by our actions and inactions, allowed abusive powers, systems, and leaders to remain unchecked; that we continue to profit from abusive relationships between people, systems, and creation itself and thus failed to live in true humility and Christ-likeness.<sup>26</sup>

**We affirm** that Christ calls us not to seek to be honored, but to serve;<sup>27</sup> that our call as Christians is to tear open our hearts, experience the pain and suffering of others, and be moved to acts of compassion, mercy, and justice,<sup>28</sup> to bear one another's burdens.<sup>29</sup>

Through all things, Christ continues to be our only source of hope -- in life and in death -- for we belong, body and soul, to our Lord and Savior.<sup>30</sup>

Yet this does not absolve us of our responsibility to our human family or to Creation as a whole. Indeed, the burden is upon us to live the faith we profess through action, word, and Sacrament.

We live in an era, and a nation, wrought with divisive and hate-filled rhetoric and hardening our hearts and closing our minds is akin to silence, and silence is complicity.<sup>31</sup>

Our communion with one another in Christ demands that we stand up and speak out on behalf of the oppressed and the marginalized. This is our great burden and our joyful duty! Until that day when swords are beaten into plowshares and spears are turned into pruning hooks,<sup>32</sup> our work is not done.

We continue to pray for the day when God will tear open the heavens and come down,<sup>33</sup> when justice will roll down like waters, and righteousness will become an everlasting stream.<sup>34</sup> We pray for the Spirit to empower and enliven us, to the glory of God.

Our God is good, and our work is before us. Amen.

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<sup>19</sup> Acts 24:15; Romans 5:5

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 46:2

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 10:28

<sup>22</sup> Book of Order F-1.0301 (The Calling of the Church)

<sup>23</sup> John 15:13

<sup>24</sup> Philippians 3:10-11

<sup>25</sup> Proverbs 8:13; Isaiah 25:11; 1 John 2:16

<sup>26</sup> Ephesians 4:2

<sup>27</sup> Mark 10:45

<sup>28</sup> Luke 10:37

<sup>29</sup> Galatians 6:2

<sup>30</sup> Book of Confessions 4.001 (Heidelberg Catechism Question & Answer 1)

<sup>31</sup> Esther 4:14; Psalm 50:3

<sup>32</sup> Isaiah 2:4

<sup>33</sup> Isaiah 64:1

<sup>34</sup> Amos 5:24

With humility and hope,

1. The Rev. Kyle B. Delhagen	Geneva	
2. The Rev. Casey C. Carbone	Northern New York	
3. The Rev. Jeniffer Rodriguez	Hudson River	
4. The Rev. Rebecca Lawson Putman	Albany	<i>solo pastor</i>
5. Kieran W. Andrews	Utica	<i>church treasurer</i>
6. The Rev. Devin Dickinson	Northern New England	
7. The Rev. Lenore Scales	New Brunswick	<i>campus ministry</i>
8. The Rev. Emily Brewer	New York City	<i>executive director</i>
9. The Rev. Katherine Scott-Kirschner	Newark	
10. The Rev. Brandi C. Wooten	Genesee Valley	<i>solo pastor</i>
11. The Rev. Jeromey Howard	Hudson River	<i>solo pastor</i>
12. The Rev. Adam Gorman	New York City	<i>associate pastor</i>
13. Ruling Elder Audrey Webber	New York City	<i>seminarian</i>
14. The Rev. Alison Paden	Newton	<i>associate pastor</i>
15. The Rev. Andrea Joy Holroyd	Albany	<i>solo pastor</i>
16. The Rev. Kate Carlisle	Boston	
17. The Rev. Garrett Vittorio Schindler	Susquehanna Valley	
18. Christopher Draffen	Albany	<i>music, lay preacher</i>
19. The Rev. Kathryn Stenta	Albany	<i>solo pastor</i>
20. Matt Paulik	Newton	