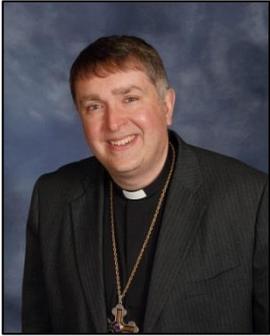




Eastern North Dakota Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



Dear Friends in Christ,

In these last weeks, I have led prayer services for ALL affected by the conflict at Standing Rock. Praying and speaking words of peace is the best of what we do as the Church. At the services we prayed for protestors, law enforcement, National Guard, farmers, ranchers, community members and those serving in the government and judicial systems. At the end of each prayer service, I led in the familiar prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226):

**Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;
where there is hatred,
let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is discord, union;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.**
**O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born
to eternal life.**

Last week, Presiding Bishop Eaton issued a statement regarding Standing Rock. The statement was embraced by some, while for others, the statement has caused angst. While I agree with Bishop Eaton concerning the need to come along side of First Nations people, I believe the statement did not recognize the complexity of Standing Rock, nor did it address the current realities of Standing Rock.

In an effort to genuinely understand the conflict, I have visited Standing Rock multiple times. Each time, I experienced a peaceful, prayerful protest. I also engaged in conversation with state leaders about faithful leadership in a situation like this.

Since then, the protest has changed. There has been more violence and rioting. I am saddened by the turn of events, especially because a high percentage of the protestors are

not Native Americans, nor are they North Dakotans. Bishop Eaton's statement speaks of the "complexities", but does not go far enough in spelling out what that means. While I agree we need to do a better job of practicing accompaniment with Native peoples; it is important to recognize farmers and ranchers are being inhibited or prohibited as they seek to live out their vocations to feed the world. It is important to recognize those called into law enforcement are not evil, but are living out their vocation to make sure all are safe. It is important to remember construction workers are simply trying to put food on the table for their family; and the judicial system is sorting through how to move forward.

Martin Luther stated all humans are "Simul iustus et peccator", which translated means "simultaneously saint and sinner". All are simultaneously saint and sinner - protestors, law enforcement, farmers, ranchers, those in the judicial system, you and me. Have mistakes been made by all groups? For sure. My friends, this is not and should not be a zero sum game where one or more groups must be "bad/wrong" while the others are "good/right".

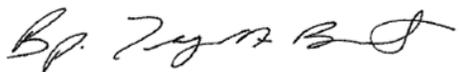
As the situation escalates, I fear for the weeks to come. While I am not afraid of speaking out words of justice, I do not think it is helpful for the church to take sides on this issue, especially when the situation has turned violent.

Please know the Eastern North Dakota Synod has not, nor will it, send financial support for the protest. Instead, my call for Eastern North Dakota Synod is to continue to speak words of peace, pray prayers for all involved, and to seek to be in relationship and have conversation with those who are different in culture and/or opinion than us.

In a previous statement, I called on the synod to let the words of Ephesians 4 guide us, **"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I (Paul) urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."**

If you have any questions, I'm always available for conversation.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bp. Terry A. Brandt".

Bishop Terry A. Brandt