

January 2016

An Open Letter to Our Elected Government Officials

We are moved to express our concern regarding the content and tone of the statewide and national rhetoric in recent weeks, regarding anti-Muslim and anti-immigration language. We implore you to speak out as a builder of peace and to work toward tolerance, acceptance, and respect for all lives. As members of a Christian community, we seek peace and justice and are reminded of the command to “love one another.” The story we live by declares that all people are children of God; we are connected with one another as brothers and sisters, regardless of differences. We believe that the richness of all lives is severely diminished when barriers are drawn and people in any group are marginalized or demonized.

We know that providing security for our citizens is an important element in caring and loving; however, providing security does not necessitate increased suspicion and division between entire groups of people. As people of faith, we believe it is imperative to build bridges between various communities, including our Muslim brothers and sisters, and that we must assist Syrian refugees who are fleeing the same terrorism we hope to avoid. To live in fear of the other and to fail to reach out to those in need, are counter to our Christian belief and compromise the ability of the greater community to embrace our full, shared humanity.

We also know that words matter, having both the power to harm and to heal. As elected representatives of the people, you have greater influence in shaping the local and national conversation. You have a responsibility to promote peace and to help enact legislation that protects all individuals. Operating out of fear only deepens suspicions and divisions and is the antithesis of long-term peace. Therefore, we implore you to be courageous and to speak out publicly against the divisive speech that is so prominent in current public discourse. In addition, we urge you to support the bringing of refugees to our country and state, and to promote understanding between the Muslim community and others.

We know these are difficult times, and we appreciate your willingness to serve as a public official. We hope that this New Year brings a renewed commitment to serving others, especially those who are threatened or marginalized.

Sincerely,

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bangor, Maine, represented by:

Neal Pratt, Council President (Hampden)

Ruby Herring (Dover-Foxcroft)

Kris Hoffmann, Vice President (Bangor)

Pat Kelly (Bangor)

Eric Jergenson, Secretary (Stockton Springs)

Charles Newton (Winterport)

Aaron Domina (Hampden)

Rev. Rebecca Liberty, Pastor (Bangor)

Ardis Hacker (Dover-Foxcroft)

Rev. Elaine Hewes, Pastor (Sedgwick)