



January 6, 2020

Dear church,

Grace and peace to you on this the Epiphany of Our Lord! I write to you with a heavy heart as I like you have witnessed the unrest in our nation's capital today. These events are deeply disturbing and do not represent who we are at our best as a democracy. Today's protestors pushed through police barricades and forced their way into congressional chambers. The Capitol building was threatened and it threatens our nation, our constitution, all who work in the capitol, and our common good. Regardless of who you voted for or didn't vote for, your political party, or lack thereof; this impedes a peaceful transition of power.

Actions like these are not peaceful and lead to growing divisiveness. These attacks have thrown our nation into further chaos, fear, and anxiety during the height of COVID-19 and its continuing implications on our fellow citizens. And yet, we who claim our truth in the Triune God know that arrogance and hatred never have the last word. Love will conquer hate. It always does.

We lament when our world is rent by violence and yet pray that from the ashes of despair, violence will end, and all works of hatred cease. As the hymn states, *"When our world is rent by violence and our lives are marred by grief, when our songs of calm assurance turn to cries of unbelief: God, we raise our lamentation seeking refuge and relief. Raise up beauty from the ashes; end our violence; tend our peace. Give us visions of a future where all captives find release, where oppression is evicted, and all works of hatred cease."* (David Bjorlin)

And for me, I turn to Isaiah 43:2, to trust that God is with us in the midst of crisis:

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume you."

These are troubling times indeed, but God is with us. We lean into that promise, we cling to it in times that bring fear, uncertainty, and doubt in our lives and in the nation.

And, we continue to pray, but we also put our prayers to action. Let us pray. "We pray to you almighty God, in this time of civil unrest. You are our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Do not let us fail in the face of these events. Uphold us with your love, and give us the strength we need. Help us in our confusion, and guide our actions. Heal the hurt, console the bereaved and afflicted, protect the innocent and helpless, and deliver any who are still in peril; for the sake of your great mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." (A Prayer during Civil Unrest)

Be of good courage!

*+Kevin L. Strickland*

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