



Northeastern Ohio Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

*“Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth.”*

[Psalm 46:10]

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ of the Northeastern Ohio Synod,

The eyes of the nation, and to a great extent, the world, will be on Cleveland, Ohio, the week of July 18-22, 2016, as it hosts the Republican National Convention.

For one week the city will attempt to put its best face on display for the thousands of visitors that will flock to Cleveland and its surrounding areas, in an effort to leave them with a positive image of this frequently maligned city that you and I call home.

As the largest city in the Northeastern Ohio Synod, our church will be in the spotlight as well. Though the church is not a part of the political process *per se*, it is a part of the fabric of society. Holy Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions teach us that God is present and active in all realms of life, including the political process.

I would encourage you to read the ELCA Social Statement, “[The Church in Society, a Lutheran Perspective](#).” It is a brief, eight-page document that sets forth affirmations and commitments to guide this church’s participation in society. It can be found on the ELCA website, along with many other resources pertaining to the political process.

This church understands government as a means through which God works to preserve creation and build a more peaceful and just social order in a sinful world. Our faith calls us to be a public witness to the love of God for all humankind and for all creation. We are called to learn more and speak out on issues affecting those who are governed by its political leaders. Therefore, it should not surprise you that there will be Lutherans among the delegates attending the convention.

As we prepare to receive these delegations from all over the United States, I would like to share a few reflections that will hopefully guide your thinking in the coming week.

We live in an age of diversity. Ours is the most multicultural, multiethnic, multi-faith country in the world; society may have valid reasons to respect the fact that others may not embrace the same religion or the same God that we worship. As a result, relationships with others are often strife-or tension-filled, the nation is overwhelmed with anxiety, and our people are deeply divided.

In just the past week our country has been rocked by gun violence against police, precipitated by the shooting of African-American men by police, none of it seemingly justifiable. Over the past year we've witnessed mass shootings of people in churches, college campuses, on the streets of Cleveland, and other public places.

Humility is noticeably absent in political campaigns. Self-congratulation is more the typical response. The election process is degrading and exhausting both to the politician and to the people they seek to lead. Countless politicians seek election and power by playing upon what we've come to know as "the politics of fear." Our congressional leaders have become known more for their partisan bickering than for enacting useful legislation.

Our world seems bent on destruction; with seemingly endless wars going on in the Middle East and elsewhere, terrorist bombings and threats of bombings by extremist groups escalating fear and disrupting otherwise normal lives.

Yet God is present in the midst of all of this. As the psalmist tells us, "*God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.*" [Psalm 46:1]

Our real strength, as communities of faith, as a nation, and as God's people, comes from our spiritual nature in showing compassion, tolerance, and a deeper understanding of our humanity. It takes humility on our part to pray for the flawed, human politicians who serve the larger, common good. People, institutions, friends, families, jobs, and circumstances do not need to be perfect or exemplary for us to be thankful for them.

I encourage you to take some time in the following days to pray. Pray for the safety and security of our city, for those who will be visiting as well as its residents. Pray that God's Spirit of wisdom and understanding will be evident in all the deliberation and debate that will take place on the convention floor and beyond. Pray that harmony and reason prevail in the interactions among people. Pray that compassion and hope be the ultimate outcome of the week's actions and that our nation can face the future with courage.

I also pray that as we move forward into the coming week, that we be often, if not constantly reminded of the covenant God made with us in Holy Baptism, so that in all we say and do we proclaim Christ, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace.

Blessings,



+The Rev. Abraham D. Allende
Bishop