

Raising Our Voices in Prophetic Witness: A Declaration of First Presbyterian Church of Durham, NC

We, the people of First Presbyterian Church of Durham, NC, will not remain silent. We are called by our humanity, our faith, and by the God in whom we place our faith to raise our voices in prophetic witness, proclaiming the Kingdom of God and denouncing as immoral forces within our government that are now taking actions and imposing policies on American society that are antithetical to our Christian values.

As Christians, our beliefs are rooted in the beatitudes: Blessed are the poor, the dispirited, the bereft, the meek, those who hunger for food or for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted (Matthew 5:1-12). We cannot, therefore, be reserved in our witness to God's Kingdom, living as we do in a world that values wealth, profits from war, and persecutes prophetic dissent. Our calling is not to be silent but to be like a city built upon a hill, to be the salt of the earth, to be the light of the world.

Therefore, we commit ourselves to the following:

- To speak up as individuals and as a congregation, for we aspire to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves (Proverbs 31:8-9);
- To support our pastors and preachers as they proclaim our values from the pulpit, and when they fail, to encourage them to speak up (2 Timothy 4:2);
- To be unwavering in our support for immigrants, for we aspire to love the stranger (Leviticus 19:33-34);
- To dismantle structural racism, confront white supremacy, and stand against Christian nationalism, for we aspire to obey the laws of God. (Acts 5:29);
- To weave our LGBTQ+ spiritual kin into the fabric of society, for we are all one in Christ (Galatians 3:28);
- To publicly confess our complicity in the sinfulness of our nation, when we have acted with cruelty rather than righteousness and justice, and to note historic and current failings, so that we all might repent and refrain from repeating that sinfulness (James 5:16);
- To stand in solidarity with our spiritual kin of every faith and no faith, especially those under threat, for we understand that everyone who does God's will is acceptable to God (Acts 10:34-35); and
- To preserve the earth, with particular emphasis on the urgent need to address climate change, for we aspire to be responsible stewards and care for creation (Genesis 2:15).

Consistent with those commitments, we condemn the following actions:

- Mistreating immigrant communities through kidnapping, imprisonment without due process, family separation, and deportation to facilities known to engage in deprivation and torture;
- Rolling back civil rights protections for women, ethnic minorities and LGBTQ+ people;
- Using military force in American cities, especially against peaceful dissenters;

- Gutting of essential government services, including those that feed the poor and provide healthcare for the uninsured;
- Attempting to end constitutional guarantees to birthright and naturalized citizenship;
- Imperiling efforts to slow climate change, which threatens the health of all creation and humanity, and is already ravaging the most vulnerable among us;
- Slashing funding and halting progress on scientific and medical research essential to protecting the wellbeing of society;
- Diminishing the rights of citizens to express their views through the voting process;
- Criminalizing protest and escalating attacks on the press and academic freedom;
- Damaging public education by withdrawing support for programs that enhance fair and equitable educational opportunities for all;
- Undermining the system of checks and balances and dismantling democratic institutions that provide essential accountability for all who wield power;
- Politicizing American institutions, such as the military, the Department of Justice, and the Federal Reserve; and
- Dismantling diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies within both the public and private sectors.

First Presbyterian Church of Durham, NC will not remain silent. We will support those policies that are compassionate and ethical in their treatment of God's children and that care for God's creation responsibly. At this perilous moment, we must stand against tyranny and oppression and, with courage, make manifest the Kingdom of God.

Approved by the Session on the first day of December, 2025.

*Signed: Rev. Dr. Mindy Douglas, Moderator of the Session
Jane Wettach, Clerk of Session*

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