



An Introduction & Invitation to Join St. John's New Faith & Democracy Ministry

We are offering a new ministry at St. John's for those looking for ways to respond to the current threats to our democracy, based on our Christian and Episcopalian faith. Our goal is to provide opportunities for prayer, education and action based on recent statements from Episcopal Church leadership and the policy positions of The Episcopal Church, both of which are available [here](#), and on the following, adapted from the 2024 *Statement on Faith and Democracy*, signed by then-Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and EDOW Bishop Mariann Budde, among many other faith leaders, and its precursor document *Reclaiming Jesus: A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis*.

We believe that, as people of faith, we cannot remain neutral about the choices before us and must stand for the future of democracy in our nation. In light of specific threats to undermine and weaken our democratic system that are in direct opposition to our foundational faith values, we are called to resist cynicism, apathy and fear and actively challenge these threats as best we can.

We believe that all people are made in the image and likeness of God and we are called to respect the dignity of every person. Democratic governance is an outgrowth of our divinely-endowed dignity and corresponding obligation to protect the rights, freedom and equality of all. Because every human being is of equal value and worth before God, we reject any attempt to limit, suppress, intimidate or subvert equal participation in our democracy on any basis.

We believe that Christ's way of leadership is servanthood, not domination. We support democracy, not because we believe in human perfection but because we do not. The mechanisms of democracy, the balances of power and the protections of a Constitutional framework all serve to rein in human tendencies to dominate, demean and exploit. Because we believe authoritarian political leadership is a theological danger threatening democracy and the common good, we will resist it.

We believe that, as people of faith, we are called to speak truth, put away falsehood and walk in integrity. A healthy democracy rests upon a foundation of truth and we must work to foster trust among citizens. Because truth-telling is integral to the pursuit of the common good, we denounce the sowing of falsehood, the use of lies and half-truths by officials to distort truth, and the weaponization of fear and despair as a strategy to acquire or maintain power.

We believe that, as people of faith, we are called to assume the role of defender of the most vulnerable. We cannot practice justice if we do not defend those who have been treated unfairly. We cannot proclaim mercy if we do not defend those who have been treated without compassion. We cannot say we walk in humility while witnessing suffering. We reject the

language and policies of political leaders who would debase and abandon the most vulnerable children of God. We cannot accept government actions that undermine the core principles enshrined in the US Constitution, especially those guaranteeing the right to due process and the rule of law. Nor can we accept the neglect of the well-being of low-income families and children.

We believe in religious pluralism. A democracy must recognize religious pluralism and uphold religious freedom, respecting both minority and majority religious beliefs. Because democratic life requires pluralism, we repudiate political systems, parties, movements, laws, regulations and policies that raise any group of people, including Christians, above others by granting them special rights and privileges. Specifically, we repudiate the tenets of Christian Nationalism and the idea that Christians or Christianity should hold a place of privilege and power in our nation's governance.

We believe we are called to be peacemakers. Rather than stir conflict and seed mistrust, we are called to collaborate with individuals and institutions—religious or secular—to work for the common good and for the realization of a more just world at peace. Because peace and stability are characteristics of a healthy democracy, we condemn the rising tide of violent language and behaviors, including violent threats and actions against public servants and fellow citizens.

These values reflect a brief overview of what we believe and we look forward to comments, edits and discussion as the ministry evolves.

A rough draft of our plan includes:

- **Pray:**
 - Vigils, ours and others
 - Individual and collective prayer
 - Keep clergy informed of our plans and facilitate coordination, if appropriate
- **Educate:**
 - Host a series of town halls with engaging speakers on important issues like rule of law, Christian nationalism, faith & politics, media disinformation, etc.
 - Teach-ins— civics, etc
 - Draft *In Perspective* and *Do Justice* pieces.
 - Maintain lists of resources – reading, sources for accurate information, good news that the checks and balances provided for in our constitution are working.
 - Book group and other small groups
- **Take Action:**
 - **Issue Action Alerts** from the Episcopal Public Policy Network on these issues to the parish.
 - **Promote other opportunities for engagement** on these and other policy positions of The Episcopal Church (such as those on immigration, racial justice, economic justice, gun violence prevention, the Holy Land, etc) through our individual ministries. Volunteer for organizations that focus on saving democracy,

challenge unlawful actions or just do good in the world, consistent with our faith values.

- o **Build leadership.** Cultivate leadership to effectively advance goals laid out in this document and St. John's ministries, including by working with the Leadership Development Committee.
- o **Expand the circle.** Amplify our effectiveness by working with like-minded partners. Engage with those in other communities to increase the awareness of the problems and the solutions.
- o **Protest.** Jesus' procession on Palm Sunday was not just pageantry, it was protest; it was a deliberate act of theological and political confrontation. A Harvard study finds that no government can withstand a challenge of 3.5% of its population without either accommodating the movement or (in extreme cases) disintegrating. In the United States, this is 12 million people. Bipartisan multifaith gatherings include [Faithful Witness Wednesdays](#) and [Moral Mondays at the Capitol](#).
- o **Use the power of the purse.** Donate to organizations that focus on these issues, challenge unlawful actions or just do good in the world. Buy from businesses with values we support.
- o **Bear witness.** Testify to the personal stories of those impacted by US government policies, such as: federal workers and contractors who have lost their jobs; as well as, critical expertise and functions that have been lost.
- o **Run for Elected Office.** Become a candidate for your local school board, county council, or state legislature.

If you'd like to participate and/or receive email communications from this new ministry, please contact Lisa Raisner at lraisner@gmail.com, Rob Hartmann at rhartmann6948@gmail.com, Ken Giunta at kennethgiunta@gmail.com, or Tara Giunta at taragiunta@gmail.com. (You can opt out from email communications at any time.) We welcome all forms of engagement — comments, ideas, planning or just partaking in the opportunities. Our goal is to reduce overwhelm and pressure and make our voices and our faith values heard.