

January 13, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

## **A Statement for the SED Prayer Service for the Nation**

### **Background to the Statement**

*The Southeastern District Staff met on Monday, January 4, 2021 and made the decision to have a Prayer Service for the Nation, two days before the attack on the National Capitol. On that Monday we recognized that because of the intensity of the rhetoric in our nation, the most important action we could take was to offer the opportunity to the SED to gather to pray for the nation as we approached the Presidential transition and Inauguration.*

*Initially, we had suggested that we have the prayer on Epiphany, January 6<sup>th</sup>, but decided we needed more few more days to plan and publicize the prayer event. As a result, we planned the event for Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM. That chosen time to gather for prayer became even more significant after the attack on our National Capitol took place on January 6, 2021.*

*As we gathered to pray for our SED webcast on Sunday evening, we were blessed to have the participation of:*

*The Rev. Lloyd Gaines, Pastor, Peace Lutheran Church, Washington DC and 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President of the SED*

*The Rev. Yared Halche, SED Interethnic Mission Engagement Facilitator*

*The Rev. Matthew Harrison, LCMS Synod President*

*The Rev. Michael Lange, California-Nevada-Hawaii District President*

*The Rev. Paul Linnemann, Northwest District President*

*The Rev. David Maier, Council of President Chairman and Michigan District President*

*The Rev. Greg Walton, Florida-Georgia District President*

### **The Statement at the Beginning of the Prayer Service**

*As children reflecting the light of Jesus, we have a special calling as citizens on this earth. Paul wrote these words to Timothy during the chaotic reign of Nero: “I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Savior who wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all men” (I Timothy 2:1-6).*



On Sunday, January 10, 2021, we gathered to pray for our nation during a time of Presidential transition. In times past the approach of an inauguration was filled with anticipation, whether or not the candidate we each voted for won or lost. It has been a time-honored tradition to honor our democracy and the peaceful transition of power. Over the years of living close to Washington DC, our family has enjoyed the special moments to stand on the parade route on Pennsylvania Ave to welcome the new President and Vice President even as the nation bade farewell and blessing to the previous President.

But it feels different today. We are experiencing a dark time in the United States of America. The winter months we're now experiencing were already predicted to be dark due to the surge in COVID-19 infections and death. The darkness has grown deeper due to the twin-virus of racism – which is continues to oppress and take lives of African Americans and others.

New layers of darkness, fear, and uncertainty were added when democracy was attacked, and our National Capitol was under the siege of a violent mob while both Houses of Congress were involved in the democratic process of certifying the electoral vote for the President of the United States. Blood was shed. Lives were lost. Those responsible for the mayhem are being identified and will be accountable for their actions. The day reminded those of us who have lived here in the National Capital Region of another dark day on Sept 11, 2001 when the Pentagon was attacked by terrorists (along with the Twin Towers in New York City) only this time the attack came from citizens of our nation. One did not have to live in the Washington DC region to be shocked and horrified by what we saw at our National Capitol on the day we call Epiphany.

Nonetheless, as we gather, we do not despair. We do not respond as people who have no hope. Instead, we are people of hope, light, and peace under the reign of King Jesus!

As we gather, we come together from many language groups, ethnic backgrounds, and skin colors, but we are all daughters and sons of the Father through his beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

As we gather, we come from red states and blue states. We may identify ourselves as Republican, Democrat, Independent, Libertarian or maybe now nothing at all but we have a much more compelling identity. We wear the name of our Lord, given to us when we were baptized in the strong name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

As we gather, some of us voted for Mr. Trump. Others of us voted for Mr. Biden. Some did not vote at all, but we are all elected to be adopted as our Father's children through Jesus. By grace we stand together as brothers and sisters in Christ as we reflect His



light to one another and the people around us. Each of us is an acolyte bearing the Christ-light in this dark world.

While the events of January 6 added another layer of darkness in an already dark time, tonight as we gather, we hear the words our Lord speaks into our hearts.

A conversation with the Lord best begins with Him speaking first to us. As you hear the familiar words of Isaiah 60:1-6 and John 1:14 read, listen as if God is speaking directly to you, because He is. Allow the Lord to speak His Words into the darkness you may be experiencing in your very own heart. Listen closely to His Word as if this is the first time you are hearing it. Pay attention to words and phrases the Holy Spirit highlights for you. And then listen to the prayer being offered as your response back to the Lord.

Isaiah brought hope to people in exile. No doubt we are experiencing some of the same feelings and thoughts as the people in the Bible during the time of the exile who watched as their homeland was invaded and their temple destroyed. This prayer service will be our way to hear and respond to God's promise of light and hope in Jesus, even as we pray for the healing of our nation as we prepare for a Presidential transition and inauguration. Our King Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

*A note to the reader: we offer these readings to you to use for your own meditation and prayer, even as we had opportunity to join in the prayers offered at our SED Epiphany Prayers for Our Nation on Sunday evening, January 10, 2021. You will find the readings below.*

### **The Epiphany Dialogue**

#### **The Word of God: Isaiah 60:1**

A time to hear God speak to us:

***"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.***

A time to respond to God's Word in prayer

#### **The Word of God: Isaiah 60:2**

A time to hear God speak to us

***<sup>2</sup> See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.***

A time to respond to God's Word in prayer

#### **The Word of God: Isaiah 60:3**

A time to hear God speak to us

***<sup>3</sup> Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.***

A time to respond to God's Word in prayer



**The Word of God: Isaiah 60:4 –**

A time to hear God speak to us:

***<sup>4</sup> “Lift up your eyes and look about you:  
All assemble and come to you;  
your sons come from afar,  
and your daughters are carried on the hip.***

A time to respond to God’s Word in prayer

**The Word of God: Isaiah 60:5**

A time to hear God speak to us

***<sup>5</sup> Then you will look and be radiant,  
your heart will throb and swell with joy;  
the wealth on the seas will be brought to you,  
to you the riches of the nations will come.***

A time to respond to God’s Word in prayer

**The Word of God: Isaiah 60:6**

A time to hear God speak to us

***<sup>6</sup> Herds of camels will cover your land,  
young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come,  
bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the Lord.***

A time to respond to God’s Word in prayer

**The Word of God Fulfilled: John 1:14**

A time to hear God speak to us: ***“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”***

A time to respond to God’s Word in prayer

In the royal service of the King,

John R. Denninger, President  
Southeastern District, LCMS