



NOAH's Religious Leaders Caucus Statement on the Attack of the US Capitol

On January 6, 2020 when the Christian tradition celebrated the Feast of Epiphany, a mob of thousands stormed the United States Capitol building in an act of armed insurrection attempting to stop the democratic process and thereby tarnished our fundamental symbols of democracy. Hours before, the 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump, encouraged and rallied the crowd toward violence. As the mob marched toward the Capitol building they carried confederated flags, hoisted a noose, raised a Christian cross, brandished signs saying, “Jesus Saves,” and chanted, “U.S.A.” The crowd turned violent, as our nation’s congresspeople were rushed to safe locations, locked in the House and Senate chambers, donned gas masks, and many urgently called their loved ones in the moments of chaos. This crowd used Christian religious and racial symbols to cause terror. As religious leaders and clergy, we condemn these actions and those who inspired them in the starkest terms possible. Those who committed and encouraged such acts must be held legally accountable for their actions. We call for swift actions of justice against this act of domestic terrorism.

Sadly, we recognize that the United States is not unfamiliar with violence grounded in racial and religious symbols. From the history of forced removal of Native Americans, to the enslavement and plunder of Black people in our country, to the recent murderous violence against of black and brown people, to anti-Semitic and Islamophobic attacks on Jewish and Muslim neighbors—these realities force us to reckon with the fact that yesterday’s events are not novel. Because of this, it is especially important that white Christian communities condemn yesterday’s actions and commit to organizing and educating their communities on how their religious faith can be a source of justice and peace—not insurrection, terror, and violence. Those who identify as white amongst our group hold ourselves especially accountable to reckoning with this history and to standing in deeper solidarity with our brothers and sisters of color.

Alongside the history of racial and religious violence in the United States, there is an alternative faith tradition of justice, peace, love, and solidarity. The story of the Exodus and the great Hebrew prophets tell a story of God standing for and identifying with the oppressed. The Jewish teachings of tzedekah and tikkun olam encourage the Jewish community to work for justice and to repair the world. The Christian New Testament is a story of God’s love becoming incarnate in a humble carpenter, Jesus the Christ. The very same Jesus who preaches the Sermon on the Plain in the Gospel of Luke, also drove out money collectors in the Jewish temple in the Gospel of John. The Prophet Muhammad’s life and career is a testament to God’s mercy, as God guided Mohammed to seek refuge in Medina from persecution in Mecca. Today we claim such a justice tradition, joining our voices with the prophetic denunciation of injustice and calling our communities to stand for justice. Our religious traditions call us to commit to end such terror of white Christian Nationalism and instead build strong communities that protect and fight for what we hold most dear: our families, our dignity and equal worth as humans, our right to economic equity and affordable housing, our right to worship free from fear of anti-Semitic and Islamophobic violence.

We call all people of faith to join us to commit to organizing and educating your community about how your faith can be font of justice. Join us by participating in Nashville Organized for Action and Hope monthly board meetings. If you are a religious leader or clergy,

join the Religious Leaders Caucus. Join our fight to hold our elected officials accountable to deliver economic aid during an unprecedented pandemic ravaging our country. Help us keep our political process free of corruption of big corporations with deep pockets. This is the work of the people—it is liturgical work, to put it in terms of the Christian tradition. Yesterday, a side of our country's history was again revealed. But white Christian Nationalism does not define us. Join our work as we organize and join a long democratic tradition of freedom fighters against such racial and religious violence and stand in solidarity fighting for justice for all.