



## September 2017 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ –

With you I have been greatly disturbed by the recent events in Charlottesville.

Plainly and without question, both the hatred and prejudice expressed in Charlottesville and the attack on counter-protesters are murderous acts. There is no way in which to justify behavior of this kind as even remotely “Christian.” Indeed, the rhetoric of this group is reminiscent of the manipulation of the Gospel by Adolf Hitler and his inner circle.

Let’s not kid ourselves. Charlottesville is not so far from Alberta and the Territories. Here we know too of racism and prejudice, of hatred and discrimination of many sorts.

I was particularly moved by the quiet witness of the rostered and lay leaders, indeed, of the faith community’s response. I was moved to tears as a group of clergy walked arm-in-arm into the very center of the storm, so to speak, delaying entry to a park as they stood, sang, and kneeled. Others formed a wall of silent testimony, or offered water to the parched, or provided pastoral care to those seeking comfort and support.

How might we respond?

Condemn actions of this kind without qualification.

Do what we can to foster a climate in which such actions face collective resistance and condemnation.

Continue to learn, listen and educate ourselves.

Recognize the places where healing has yet to take root and strive do what we can to foster progress.

Practice personal vigilance that opens our lives to the work of the Holy Spirit in places where our own attitudes and prejudices remain unredeemed.

Stand alongside our brothers and sisters.

Contradict, at every turn, the efforts of these groups to wrap their behavior in the mantle of the Church.

And yes, we need to pray:

"O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all

nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

(A prayer I shared recently via Facebook and written by The Rev. Dr. Scott Sharmon, currently interfaith chaplain at the University of Alberta and also the Anglican Diocese of Edmonton's ecumenical officer, who has been named as the Anglican Church of Canada's animator for ecumenical and interfaith relations beginning September 1.)

In Christ Jesus –  
Shalom,  
+Bishop Larry Kochendorfer

(with thanks in part to [www.patheos.com](http://www.patheos.com) "8 Things We Can — and Should Do — in Response to Charlottesville" August 13, 2017 by Frederick Schmidt)

*The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 15:13