

Friday, August 2, 2024

**The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts
The New England Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
The Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ**

Over the weekend of July 27-28, 2024, five Massachusetts congregations of the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC) were attacked and vandalized. It appears these congregations were targeted because of their clear and explicit welcome of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer siblings in Christ. We have offered pastoral care and support to the affected congregations and have been working with the FBI and local authorities to respond to these crimes.

Sadly, the persons responsible for these attacks left materials indicating they were done in the name of Christ. In response, we declare our unequivocal and unwavering commitment to living out Christ's welcome to people of every sexual orientation and gender identity and celebrating their full participation and inclusion in our denominations.

Our denominations came to these positions of welcome and inclusion after intentional and extended times of prayer, study, and reflection. Open to meeting Christ in those of different opinions and viewpoints, the majority in our churches felt the Holy Spirit calling us to new welcome. Not all. There are those in our denominations who hold a more traditional view. That said, we are united in our commitment to extending Christ's love and hospitality to each other.

Our prayers are with the clergy and people of the congregations affected. Our prayers are with the LGBTQ community that was harmed by these messages. Our prayers are with the perpetrators of these attacks. Our prayers are for civil and respectful discourse that seeks to listen and understand instead of condemn and reject. Together, in the name of Christ, may we love one another and welcome one another just as Jesus welcomed all people. May we set aside violence and engage in public witness that builds a loving and just world.

Yours in Christ,

Episcopal Diocese
of Massachusetts



The Rt. Rev. Alan Gates, Bishop Diocesan, Episcopal Diocese
of Massachusetts

The Rt. Rev. Carol Gallagher, Assistant Bishop, Episcopal Diocese
of Massachusetts



Southern New England Conference
United Church of Christ
Living the Love & Justice of Jesus

The Rev. Elizabeth Garrigan-Byerly, Acting
Conference Minister, Southern New England
Conference of The United Church of Christ



New England Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

The Rev. Nathan D. Pipho, Bishop, New
England Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America