



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

Dear church,

Elections are an opportunity to remember that no matter the outcome, we belong to God whose love is steadfast and whose grace is with us always. No human candidate can guarantee our life or our future – that is work already done by God through the death and resurrection of Christ. As Lutherans, we care about government because it is a gift from God intended for the safety and flourishing of human life.

We take to heart our social teaching that energetic civic engagement is part of our baptismal vocation, both as individuals and through the church's public witness. I have seen this vocation lived out by so many of you in the 2020 election. ELCA members have canvassed, marched, served as poll workers and election monitors, and run for various offices.

We celebrate these things, even as we acknowledge this has been a long and contentious election season, marked by deep partisan rancor heightened by disinformation and social media echo chambers. Amid this division, we are called to ministries of bridge-building in the name of Jesus, who frees and heals us to seek the well-being of our neighbor. What does God want us to do now?

I believe God calls us after this election to seek healing in several places. One place must be healing as a church that understands that our unity is a gift and goal of God in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit enlivens us in this work as a community of mission and witness that seeks to be serviceable to the in-breaking of the reign of God. What can you do now to encourage your Lutheran neighbors to reach out and engage each other despite political disagreement, thereby giving a glimpse of God's reign? What doors can you open in your congregation to build relationships, promote listening and support understanding? How will you do so while digging deeper into our faith-informed values of justice, equity and inclusion? I commend to you our new social message, *"Government and Civic Engagement in the United States: Discipleship in a Democracy,"* as one way to start this conversation.

Our attention to the partisan divide does not stop with our own congregations but must extend to our communities. Our nation needs our action so that the inclusiveness practiced by this church in the midst of divisions in society shines forth as our testimony to God.

Elections are not an end, but a beginning. God calls us to be agents of healing and unity while at the same time standing firm in our basic understanding. We know unity requires justice, especially for those who have been disenfranchised, and it requires our sustained efforts to shape governmental systems that work for all.

We have a role to play in forming an ever-more perfect union. We will pray for our newly elected officials as they lead us through these and other challenges. We will, in the words of our new social message, accompany and evaluate these leaders by asking one simple but all-encompassing question: "Is the neighbor being served?"