



Dear siblings in Christ,

There is concern across this church about the Jan. 3, 2026, U.S. military action in Venezuela and what has or will follow. I believe that this Sunday's celebration of Jesus' baptism, and our own, can provide understanding, guide our prayers and promote faithful action at this time. The baptism of our Lord reminds us that Jesus is God's own beloved child, who has come to fulfill an age-old promise to bring justice and peace to the nations (Isaiah 42:1).

As God's beloved, Christians share in Jesus' ministry and compassion for the vulnerable. Our prayers remain with the people of Venezuela. We pray for their safety and well-being, for their livelihoods, and for reliable access to food, health care and clean water. Our church walks in solidarity with them through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela — their people, pastors, deacons and ministries. Support is also expressed in the broader Christian community, both in Venezuela and among the Venezuelan diaspora, who have long called for and worked toward peace, democracy and human rights.

As baptized children of God, Lutherans are set free to seek the well-being of our neighbors. Over 600,000 Venezuelans in the United States face uncertainty without renewal of Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and deportations of Venezuelan migrants continue despite these anxious times in their homeland. As Venezuela navigates a tenuous situation, our nation has a responsibility for a mindful humanitarian response.

We continue our call for humanitarian support for migrant-serving organizations in neighboring countries and pathways to asylum in the United States for Venezuelans and all with credible fears of persecution.

As followers of Jesus, we seek justice for the nations. As a church in this country, we call for what transpires next to center the Venezuelan people and their right to self-determination. We, as a country, must resist any temptation to use this occasion to foster special or corporate economic interests. As Venezuela faces continued instability, more people are likely to face displacement.

Let us avoid further polarization as we respond to what is unfolding. Lutheran theology affirms that two things at once can be true. The removal of Nicolás Maduro, a corrupt authoritarian, and the end of his brutal repression are causes for celebration for many. At the same time, U.S. action in Venezuela without the constitutionally mandated authorization of the U.S. Congress violated international law and created a dangerous precedent that weakens global peace and security. Our social teaching tells us that any conflict must meet strict moral criteria rooted in the principles of "right intention, justifiable cause, legitimate authority ..." ([*For Peace in God's World*](#), page 11).

In this highly complex and dangerous moment, Christians remember that Jesus is God's beloved child. Through our baptisms, this identity and mission forms us and calls us to civic action. We are called to speak the truth in love but with clarity about accountability for any abuse of power. In this time, we can advocate boldly for a peaceful way forward and urge the U.S. Congress to exert its

authority over war powers and ensure due process is followed. This action is especially critical when risking U.S. troops' lives and the lives of civilians around the world.

As we remember the meaning of baptism for action in the world, let us be fervent in prayer for our siblings in Christ in Venezuela. Let us also support and accompany Venezuelans and their families worldwide. Born in Venezuela, Bishop Pedro Suárez of the ELCA Florida-Bahamas Synod wrote the following prayer:

By your Holy Spirit, kindle hope that does not disappoint and peace that surpasses all understanding. We entrust Venezuela, its people and your church into your loving hands, trusting not in our own strength but in your steadfast love made known in Jesus Christ, who is our peace. Amen.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yehiel Curry', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Rev. Yehiel Curry
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

About the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

The ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with 2.7 million members in more than 8,400 worshiping communities across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. Known as the church of “God’s work. Our hands,” the ELCA emphasizes the saving grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, unity among Christians and service in the world. The ELCA’s roots are in the writings of the German church reformer Martin Luther.

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