



September 23, 2024

Pastoral Letter Regarding Springfield, Ohio

We are disturbed and outraged by the reports that have masqueraded as news regarding many of our siblings in Springfield, Ohio. Public and prominent figures have intentionally crafted untruths that have assaulted the culture and character of Haitians residing in Springfield. Their words have become a swirling vortex of humiliation and dehumanization, sparked by hate and intimidation, all crafted and designed to spread fear, uproot goodwill, and dislodge trust for political gain.

While we cannot remove this irresponsible and ominous disinformation from the many media networks and platforms in the United States and beyond, we do possess the ability to counter it by publicly offering words of goodwill, hope, and love for all residents of Springfield, including our Haitian siblings. We believe such words can help transform the social exit ramps of scapegoating and othering into entrance ramps for relationships based on honor, hospitality, and love.

We the member communions of the Ohio Council of Churches, a Jesus Christ movement for unity, justice, and peace, take delight in the present and emerging diversity of Springfield. As Jesus informs us that Christian faithfulness includes welcoming strangers in our midst (Matthew 25), we join Ohioans of faith and hospitality by saying to our Haitian siblings, "Welcome to Ohio!" We gladly receive the gifts of your heritage along with the promise of your hopes for a future sparked by peace and achievement, where we, your neighbors, will joyfully join you in contributing to the common good.

Finally, to the people who possess hearts petrified by bigotry and minds calcified by falsehoods, I offer these words from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. For some strange reason, I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be."

We cannot be what we ought to be until Haitians are what they ought to be.

So let the word go forth, that now is the time for us to turn this moment of bitter chaos into a movement for the beloved community! Let us overcome threats with solidarity, overtake hate with hopefulness, and overrun fear with love. Amen

With Hope,
Jack

The Rev. Jack Sullivan, Jr., DMin, DHL
Executive Director

Below are statements from members of the Ohio Council of Churches Governing Board



Beloved, let us love one another, because love is born of God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (1 John 4:7)

We send the love of the people of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Ohio to our neighbors in Springfield, including our Haitian siblings, during this time of trial and stress. With you, we lament false rumors. With you, we deplore threats of violence. With you, we hope and pray for the love between neighbors to prevail, and to emerge with the bonds of friendship strengthened and a community at peace.

The Rt. Rev. Anne B. Jolly
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Ohio

September 19, 2024



The Synod of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

To God's beloved in the State of Ohio and beyond,

The Synod of the Covenant includes approximately 650 Presbyterian Church (USA) Congregations and 85,000 members throughout Ohio and Michigan and small parts of Indiana, Kentucky, and Wisconsin.

The recent attention to the arrival of migrants to Springfield, OH, has reminded us of two of our key ministry goals: first, "to focus on learning from and supporting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and other marginalized communities and leaders," and second, "because systemic poverty prevents God's children from experiencing Christ's abundant life, the Synod works to inspire, equip, and connect our constituents to walk alongside our disadvantaged siblings and struggle against forces that keep them in poverty."

Matthew 25:34-37 finds God blessing those who welcome the stranger with an inheritance of the Kingdom. Perhaps God gives this blessing because of the challenges inherent in welcoming those who are different from us into our midst. It often requires self-sacrifice and living out Jesus' Golden Rule: "In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you." (Matthew 7:12)

We are inspired by Springfield's Covenant Presbyterian Church's hosting a press conference with leaders from a variety of houses of worship on September 13, 2024, to proclaim God's love for immigrants and to stand against racism. Alongside these congregations, we pray that God will bring shalom to Springfield and all communities, so that long-time residents, new arrivals, and town leaders can all find reconciliation and hope.

Praying God's blessings for all,



Rev. Charles B. Hardwick, Ph.D.
Executive, The Synod of the Covenant
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Board Member, Ohio Council of Churches



OHIO EPISCOPAL AREA

East & West Ohio Conferences

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

BISHOP HEE-SOO JUNG

September 20, 2024

A Call to Prayer for Springfield, Immigrants

Dear Beloved in Christ,

It is impossible to escape the news of what has happened in Springfield, Ohio. Misinformation has caused chaos and hurt within the community, especially to Haitian immigrants in the area. As United Methodists, we believe justice belongs to all. Any discrimination and harm must stop.

As Christians, we believe in Jesus Christ who calls us to welcome the stranger and to love our neighbor. It is for this reason that I call upon United Methodists to join me in prayer for the people of Springfield. I offer this prayer to you.

O God, you are the hope of all the ends of the earth, the God of the spirits of all flesh. Hear our humble intercession for all races and families on earth, that you will turn all hearts to yourself. Remove from our minds hatred, prejudice, and contempt for those who are not of our race or color, class or creed, that, departing from everything that estranges and divides, we may by you be brought into unity of spirit, and the bond of peace. Amen. ---The United Methodist Book of Worship, (pg. 526).

Peace,

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung
The Ohio Episcopal Area

East Ohio Conference

8800 Cleveland Avenue NW, North Canton, OH 44720
(330) 499-3972
www.eocumc.com

West Ohio Conference

32 Wesley Boulevard Worthington, OH 43085
(614) 844-6200
www.westohioumc.org



HEARTLAND CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
N. KY • OH • WV

Dear Friends in Christ,

I write from my heart to yours calling you to join me in support of the Haitian community in Springfield, Ohio, which is part of the Southern Ohio Northern Kentucky Association (SONKA) of the Heartland Conference. These beloveds of God have experienced prejudice and threats of violence as a result of lies that have been told about them. Let us stand with them as the beloved children of God that they are and utterly reject such false narratives.

Christian scripture calls us to "...put away falsehood, let each of you speak the truth with your neighbor...Let no evil talk come out of your mouths but only what is good for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear." (Ephesians 4:25,29)

In the past week, violent threats from outsiders urged on by false narratives about the Haitian members of the Springfield community have resulted in the closing of schools, businesses, and government offices. This perpetuation of lies, hate, and fear is a rejection of the core values of our faith.

Let us embrace our Haitian siblings and the entire community of Springfield. Together they have worked for years to build a community of flourishing where all can have a job, put down roots, and be treated as equally beloved children of God. I urge everyone to join in standing with them in this difficult time.

Further, let those who continue to perpetuate falsehoods about the Haitian community in Springfield stop using hate for political gain. Let us urge everyone to prophetically resist and interrupt these tactics and untruths whenever and wherever they arise, using instead the truth that builds up. Our voices matter in this important work, regardless of where we live.

Finally, I encourage your financial support of the Haitian Community in Springfield. Your gifts may be sent to the Haitian Support Center of Springfield by clicking [here](#) or the Springfield Foundation by clicking [here](#). If you find yourself near Springfield, I encourage you to eat at a Haitian-owned restaurant or otherwise support a Haitian-owned business. Together may we embody the upbuilding love of God made known to us in Christ so that those in our midst who suffer may know they are not alone.

Blessings and Godspeed,

Rev. Dr. David Long-Higgins

Conference Minister

Heartland Conference United Church of Christ

PO Box 1230 | Worthington, OH 43085 US

September 10, 2024



Diocese of Southern Ohio

Our Words Matter - Standing Up Against Hate in Springfield

Dear People of God in the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio,

As people of God, we know that our words matter. Our stories matter. In our baptism, we promise to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ, and to respect the dignity of every person. When we go into the world, we seek and serve the marginalized, drawing our circle ever wider, knowing that Jesus calls us unequivocally to love our neighbor as ourselves.

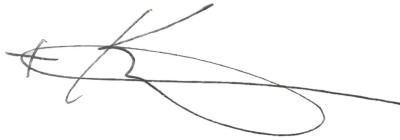
Over the last several days, because of hate-filled words and fabricated stories, the community of Springfield, Ohio has been thrust into the national spotlight, prompting a barrage of racist threats against our Haitian neighbors. Let me be clear: these stories are fear-mongering and admitted lies. These dangerous falsehoods have resulted in a tense moment of palpable racism, bomb threats that have shut down schools and workplaces, and the cruel politicization of one child's tragic death.

Over the past week, I've been in conversation with the Rev. Michelle Boomgaard, Ph.D., rector serving Christ Church, Springfield, and am deeply grateful for her leadership. United with other faith leaders in Springfield, they have been strong in their witness against hate and calling the community toward compassionate welcome. They offer these ways to take action in support of the Haitian community in Springfield and in our own communities:

- Stop spreading misinformation and memes. The situation in Springfield is dangerous, and joking about it only exacerbates the tension on the ground and gives credibility to the conversation.
- Engage Haitian businesses. With the barrage of bomb-threats and other abuse, utilizing our neighbors businesses can mitigate the effects of unforeseen closures and other safety provisions.
- Join me in giving to Springfield's **Haitian Community Help and Support Center**, a nonprofit by and for Haitians, helping to connect neighbors with local services and support networks.
- Act locally to support immigrants of all backgrounds in their transition to this new country, making clear our call to welcome the stranger in our midst.

Friends, as Episcopalians in Ohio, we must stand strong and use the words and stories Jesus taught us. Together, we can confront this hate with love, this fear with compassion, these words of evil with the words of the Good News: that the way of Jesus is the way of God's boundless and never ceasing love.

Yours in Christ,



The Rt. Rev. Kristin Uffelman White
Bishop of the Diocese of Southern Ohio

Read this letter on our website.

Diocese of Southern Ohio | 412 Sycamore St. | Cincinnati, OH 45202 US

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CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN OHIO
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST
A COVENANT NETWORK OF CONGREGATIONS

Pastoral Letter In Support Of Our Haitian Friends & Neighbors

Our Regional Minister, the Rev. Allen V. Harris, was one of those who worked diligently on a statement of support for our Haitian immigrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking friends, family, and neighbors (along with several others who did the majority of the writing).

You can read the entire letter here: [A Statement in Support of Immigrant Communities - Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#)

We are proud that Rev. Harris is one of the primary signers of the statement. While the Christian Church in Ohio does not have any specific congregations or leaders who are Haitian or of Haitian decent, that we know of at least, we live in the state that sadly was recently and repeatedly targeted by violent and racist language which has regrettably motivated hateful actions and has instilled fear and has undeniably harmed children, youth, and adults in Springfield.

The Rev. Dr. William Barber, one of the leaders of the Repairers of the Breach, will be hosting a Prayer Service on Sunday, September 22 at 2 p.m. at Greater Grace Temple, 380 W. Leffel Ln., Springfield, Ohio 45506. Other faith leaders, including several of our own Disciples of Christ leaders, will be present and speaking.

Because we do not have a Disciples of Christ presence in Springfield, we are advising individuals and congregations hold their donations until we find a local organization that we can be assured will use the funds to care for the Haitian Community of Springfield.

Your prayers and your willingness to confront hateful rhetoric and misinformation about Haitian and other refugees, immigrants, and asylum-seekers would be most helpful at this time.

We would also like to lift up the pro-active and positive work of The Ohio Immigrant Alliance which has launched [#OneLoveOhio](#) to spotlight the acts of kindness — large and small — that we see happening in our communities every day. Check out the site at oneloveohio.org and nominate positive stories of community-building [here](#).

At the new [#OneLoveOhio site](#), you'll find examples of pastors and [other people of faith](#) inviting people from all backgrounds to [pray together](#), and reminding people who call themselves Christians [what the gospel says](#) about human dignity. Community members flocking to [support Haitian-owned businesses](#). Check out chef Alain Lamaire's [wise words, and recipe](#) for creole chicken with cashews as well as a [viral video](#) from a "Millennial Mom."

We will keep our members and leaders in the Christian Church in Ohio apprised of opportunities for donations and actions to support our Haitian friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors in Springfield and around Ohio.

Faithfully Yours,

Rev. Allen V. Harris

Regional Pastor & President

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10335 Maple Dell Rd | Marysville, OH 43040 | Phone 614-433-0343 | Fax 614-433-7285 | ccinoh.org

