

## End of the Trump Era

After four long years of a White House marked by depravity, racism, cruelty, white supremacy, and incompetence, the tide has turned and numerous Trump supporters and officials are scurrying to depart from the wreckage. A few are resigning and some have denounced the riot that overran the Capitol this week.

I have worked across the street from the Capitol for 35 years and have attended many meetings and events there over the years. I will never forget the fear that gripped us on September 11, 2001, as thousands fled the scene. At the United Methodist Building, we invited Capitol Police to come inside for a glass of water, to call their loved ones, and to rest. On that day, the attack was from without. On January 6, it came from within.



The area around the Capitol has become increasingly militarized over the past several decades. I have always found it disturbing. Armed guards have a tendency to swagger and glare and exclude. I have participated in numerous protests in and around the Capitol over the years and have always been in the presence of heavily armed police. I join with others in saying that were it a group of Black and Brown protestors who surged over the barricades and smashed the windows two days ago, dozens if not hundreds would have been shot dead and thousands would have been arrested.

Instead, a relative handful of White supremacists were arrested and the mob ran freely across the Capitol grounds. I am sickened by what I saw and I am even more disturbed by the fact this was orchestrated and encouraged by the president of the United States.

As calls for Trump's immediate removal mount—and I support them—and as the examination of his horrible presidency takes on additional momentum, I hope we will not spare Trump's so-called evangelical advisory board from scrutiny. This shadowy group enabled and encouraged Trump throughout this disastrous term in office.

They laid hands on him and described him as an instrument of God's will. They arrogated to themselves the right to speak for Christians. They happily excluded other Christian voices, even less extreme evangelical forces, from having access to Trump. They never said a word against Trump's racism, his hatred of immigrants, his destruction of the environment, and his favoritism of the rich. They were court prophets who sanctioned all he did.

In early 2010, I spoke to two evangelical leaders who candidly shared with me that they had been invited to the Obama White House more frequently in less than 18 months than they had in the entire 8 years of George W. Bush's presidency even though the image they presented to the public was one of unrivalled access and influence.

It was the practice of the Obama administration to invite the entire panoply of American religion to the White House. Not so under President Trump. His White House was sealed tight against any dissenting voices and this contributed to his paranoia and loss of contact with reality. His evangelical advisors never challenged that and they bear some measure of responsibility for what has unfolded even though many of them will now claim, I assure you, that they never really had any influence.

We will soon return to a more appropriate relationship between the faith community and the Biden-Harris administration. The state will not and should not seek to control people of faith nor should people of faith seek to control the state. But, people of faith must speak truth to power and those in power have a responsibility to listen.

There will always be sycophants who will tell the president whatever he or she wants to hear—we've just witnessed that over the past four years from the evangelical advisory council—but at its best the faith community speaks on behalf of the last, the least, and the lost, on behalf of the voiceless and marginalized, and on behalf of the common good.

Grace and Peace,

Jim

### **NCC STATEMENT ON THE MOB ATTACK OF THE U.S. CAPITOL**

“See how they conceive evil,  
and are pregnant with mischief,  
and bring forth lies.  
They make a pit, digging it out,  
and fall into the hole that they have made.  
Their mischief returns upon their own heads,  
and on their own heads their violence descends.”  
Psalm 7:14-16 (NRSV)

The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) condemns and repudiates the actions of pro-Trump protesters today, who instead of exercising their First Amendment rights to free speech, have put people's lives in danger, made a mockery of the American democratic process and the rule of law, vandalized the U.S. Capitol, assaulted law enforcement officers and threatened the safety of members of Congress, staffers and others who work at the Capitol building. Chaos reigns, guns have been drawn, and our democracy is under siege. This is outrageous, unacceptable, shameful and a disgrace. Every effort must be made by law enforcement to restore order immediately.

While we support nonviolent protests, and have often organized and participated in them, demonstrators desecrating the Capitol and disrupting our fair democratic process cannot be tolerated or go unpunished. All who have been involved in today's riots, those who participated as well as those who have incited this violence, must be held accountable.

“NCC staff, who work across the street from the Capitol, are safe and secure, although we are outraged and heartbroken at these drastic turn of events,” stated Jim Winkler, NCC President and General Secretary. “We are keenly aware from our own experience that what is taking place is a profound breakdown in security and is beyond anything we have ever seen before.”

In addition, we are deeply concerned by President Trump's efforts to remain in power that have led to today's violence. We fervently denounce President Trump for the role he has played in provoking this situation by

encouraging and attending a "Stop the Steal" rally earlier today, continuing to lie about the results of the election and refusing to concede and accept the election's outcome. At the rally, which was held to reject the certified results of the November 3, 2020 election, he urged the crowd to protest his loss and posted derogatory comments on social media about Vice President Pence who he pressured to overturn the results of the election, something he had no authority to do.

On this day intended to ceremonially accept the vote of the people, many Republican members of Congress also attempted to disregard the votes of nearly 82 million Americans. These votes were carefully counted votes in the states and withstood more than 60 legal challenges. Elected officials can't be allowed to pick and choose the votes they want to be counted. All votes count.

We are particularly disturbed by and aware that the votes that are being contested are those that have been legally cast by Black and Brown people in Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Georgia. These actions have proven once again that the vestiges of racism and white supremacy are still affecting and infecting our democracy. We must increase our efforts to end the scourge on our society, which not only impacts people of color but is detrimental to democracy itself.

In the midst of the violent attack on the Capitol, we are grieved to learn someone lost their life. We mourn her death and we pray no one else will be injured.

We are issuing this statement as events are unfolding. All avenues should be explored to make sure this ends today and there are no further deaths, violent actions or attacks on our government. We are anxious and deeply concerned about two weeks more of this behavior. The rhetoric and efforts to overturn our fair election must immediately end. As soon as Congress reconvenes, they must explore all options to make sure President Trump is not permitted to continue to overturn the election results nor are efforts permitted to disrupt the inauguration of the Biden-Harris administration. History will eventually tell this story and judge all involved in scorching our democracy but all those responsible must be held accountable today.

We at the NCC are praying for the safety of our members of Congress and that peace will fully be restored. We also pray that we will take the necessary steps and do the hard work so that this never happens again.