

**Raising Our Voices in Witness:
A Declaration of First Presbyterian Church of Lawrence, KS**

We, the people of First Presbyterian Church of Lawrence, KS, will not remain silent. We are called by our humanity, and the God in whom we place our faith and trust, to raise our voices in witness and denounce as immoral, those forces within our government that are taking actions and imposing policies that are antithetical to our values.

Our witness is grounded in the prophets of ancient Israel and the ministry of Jesus. The prophets called out the rulers of the nation for their corruption, greed, and injustice toward those most in need in their society. The prophet Micah summed up the prophets' message: *"God has showed you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"* (6:8) Jesus continued the prophetic tradition. His ministry embraced those considered sinners and religious outcasts. He drew a contrast between the Reign of God and the kingdoms of this world and was crucified because he disturbed the current political and religious order. Jesus called us to be a light to the world (Matt. 5:14) and a light that shines even in the darkness (John 1:5).

Therefore, we commit ourselves to the following:

- To speak up, as individuals and as a congregation, for those who cannot speak for themselves (Proverbs 31:8-9).
- To support our religious leaders as they proclaim our values from the pulpit, and when they fail, to encourage them to speak up (2 Timothy 4:2).
- To publicly confess our complicity in the past and present sinfulness of our nation when we have acted with indifference or cruelty instead of righteousness and justice.
- To be unwavering in our support for immigrants, as we are called to love the stranger as a neighbor (Leviticus 19:33-34).
- To confront the evils of structural racism, white supremacy, and Christian nationalism.
- To support the LGBTQ+ community as full members of society, with equal rights and freedoms.
- To stand in solidarity with people of faith and no faith when they are threatened as we believe that everyone who does God's will is acceptable to God (Acts 10:34-35).
- To preserve the earth, and especially the urgent need to address the climate crisis, as we strive to be responsible stewards in caring for God's creation.

Consistent with those commitments, we speak out against the following actions:

- Using federal forces to occupy and engage in police actions in U.S. cities, against the express objections of state and city officials and residents.
- Gutting essential government services, including those that feed the poor and provide health care in this country and abroad.
- Slashing funding and halting progress on scientific and medical research essential to protecting the well-being of society.
- Damaging public education by withdrawing support for programs that enhance fair and equitable educational opportunities for all.
- Dismantling policies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the public and private sectors. This includes the “whitewashing” of American history, and suppression of the contributions made by women and minorities to our country.
- Politicizing American institutions such as the military, the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, the Supreme Court, and the Federal Reserve
- Using political office for personal financial gain, suppression of free speech, and persecution of personal enemies.
- Rolling back civil rights protections for vulnerable, marginalized and under-represented communities including women, members of ethnic and racial minorities, and LGBTQ+ people.
- Reneging on commitments made to Indigenous peoples, especially in the areas of education and health care.
- Making threats against our allies and other sovereign nations.
- Imperiling efforts to address the climate crisis, that is already ravaging the most vulnerable among us, and threatens to destroy our collective humanity, our fellow creatures, and our planet.
- Targeting immigrants and their families with harassment, arrest, family separation, kidnapping, deportation, and detention centers in direct violation of their constitutional right to due process.
- Attempting to end constitutional guarantees to birthright and naturalized Citizenship.
- Engaging actively in efforts to suppress the right of all voters to vote and to have their votes counted.
- Criminalizing lawful protest and escalating attacks on press and academic freedom.
- Undermining the constitutional system of checks and balances and dismantling democratic institutions that provide essential oversight of all who wield power.

First Presbyterian Church of Lawrence, as a Matthew 25 congregation, will not remain silent. We will support those policies that are ethical and compassionate in the treatment of all God’s children and responsibly care for God’s creation. At this perilous moment we are called to stand against tyranny and oppression and, with courage, witness to the Kingdom of God.