

Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey
Weekly Witness | December 7, 2018

The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' — Luke 3.3-4

This second week of Advent we hear all about preparing. Preparing during Advent is an action that embraces the darkness in our world, while at the same time shining light on the pain. Advocating for those who live in the darkness of poverty and listening to those crying out in the wilderness of immigration detention are ways we can prepare for Christ's coming and make straight roads that are crooked.

How can we help to prepare a way for a child who was born into a poor family? The invitation this week is to reflect and act upon this question. Amidst holiday bustle and commercial cheer, where are the areas of darkness, injustice, and fear where we can bring light?

Darkness of Poverty

Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin released a bill related to minimum wage this week. It fails to undo a practice that disproportionately hurts people of color and women by carving out tip workers, farm workers, and youth workers. Unfortunately, this is the blatant discrimination from an equal minimum wage increase we were working to prevent.

This legislation falls far short. In an era of rampant income inequality, when low-income and hard-working families are struggling to afford the most basic of needs in New Jersey, 40 percent of all families are struggling to make ends meet every month. By carving out vulnerable parts of our workforce, this legislation will increase the wage gap. From a moral perspective this bill does little to fulfill what justice requires. And so our work is far from over.

The appropriate legislation, fiscally and morally, is \$15 for all workers in no more than five years, which would help over 1 million New Jersey workers and inject nearly \$4 billion into our communities and local economies. Call or email Assembly Caughlin at AsmCoughlin@njleg.org, or 732-855-7441, let him know that you are disappointed in this bill! Advocate for all low wage workers, and speak for justice! [Sign the petition here.](#)

Wilderness of Asylum Seeking

December 18 is UN Migrant Day. Sign the pledge in [solidarity with people seeking asylum](#). In the week ahead, we are asking people to call, Tweet, and tag their legislators on Facebook (and all of those newly elected) letting them know that you signed the pledge AND that you expect them to champion asylum seekers and all migrants when they are back in session next year. Already over one thousand Lutherans have signed this! Then, wish them a Merry Christmas! Here is a sample social media post: @yourlegislator, I have pledged to speak the truth, accompany and advocate with asylum seekers. As a Christian, I live out my faith by accompanying my neighbors. Please champion legislation that supports and welcomes asylum seekers when you are in DC in January. Merry Christmas!

Prayer for Light

Almighty God, who took on flesh and went to the margins of all civilizations: open our eyes and hearts during this season of Advent that we may hear Your call, and love others as You have loved both them and us. Help us to prepare for You into dark places, and to join with You and others in bringing heaven to earth by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.