

Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey
Weekly Witness | April 28, 2018

Meditation One (introit)
"engrafted to divinity"

*And you, high eternal Trinity,
acted as if you were drunk with love,
infatuated with your creature.
When you saw that this tree could bear no fruit
but the fruit of death
because it was cut off from you who are life,
you came to its rescue
with the same love
with which you had created it:
you engrafted your divinity
into the dead tree of our humanity.
O sweet tender engrafting!
You, sweetness itself,
stooped to join yourself
with our bitterness.*

- Catherine of Siena, 1347-1380
The Prayers of Catherine of Siena, ed. Suzanne Noffke

In recent days the spring has been slow to bless us and our news feeds are filled with troubling information about violence, potential wars, and a seeming disregard for our neighbors. And yet, in the midst of this distress God's love breaks through. We are reminded in this week's reading from John that as branches God has connected us to the true vine, deeply interconnected at the roots to one another and to God. And God is deeply connected to us.

It is inspiring to remember again how God has chosen to be joined to our sinfulness and offers presence in the midst of difficult days.

Where do you see God at work in the world and in your life?

ADVOCACY UPDATE

When the federal budget was passed in Washington, DC, affordable housing credit and other funding to help make housing more affordable were included. Overall, an increase to HUD's program funding by \$4.7 billion, or nearly 11 percent, was passed in DC. Highlights include:

- **Housing Choice Vouchers:** \$22 billion in total funding, \$1.7 billion above the 2017 level. This includes \$19.6 billion for renewals — which is likely sufficient to fully renew vouchers in use — and \$1.76 billion for administrative fees, a 7% increase over 2017. About \$20 million of the administrative fee amount appears to be set aside to assist agencies that are required to implement Small Area FMRs this year. The bill also provides funding for roughly 60,000 new housing vouchers, including 54,000 "mainstream" vouchers for non-elderly people with disabilities, 5,000 vouchers for homeless veterans (VASH), and 2,600 vouchers for at-risk families with children (Family Unification Program).
- **Homeless Assistance:** \$2.5 billion for homeless assistance grants, \$130 million above 2017. This includes \$80 million for the homeless youth initiative, and \$50 million for rapid rehousing and supportive services for victims of domestic violence. The bill also includes \$375 million for HOPWA.
- \$1.36 billion for HOME (\$412 million above 2017) and \$3.3 billion for CDBG formula

Thank you for all of the effort you have put in to ensuring our neighbors are cared for. And be sure to thank your representatives and senators in Washington for their work -- and encourage them to continue advocating on behalf of housing for all!