

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

*From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. —Mark 7:24-37*

This is a difficult story. But even though Jesus's words may have been meant to dismiss this Syrophenician woman, he did not ignore her. She was able to draw Jesus into a conversation, and advocated for her daughter's health. It seems clear she knew that God's power could heal her daughter if she could just engage him. What courage!

How often do we urge people with power to change their minds? The very act of putting our need, or the needs of our neighbors, into words takes courage. But when we tell our story with compelling emotion, those in power can be moved. This gospel reading is a biblical account of the power of advocacy!

Jesus changed his mind and a daughter was healed because of one mother's selfless love, courage, and faith. Our collective selfless love can change the world, too. We can influence the hearts and minds of those who set policies or laws because together our cumulative energy is persuasive.

#### ADVOCACY ASK

Congress is back in session down in Washington, DC after the summer break and negotiations over SNAP and the Farm Bill will heat up quickly. We need to send a strong message to the House and Senate that they must protect and strengthen SNAP.

Two versions of the Farm Bill are in play. The House Farm Bill would lower the income limits for a family to qualify, effectively cutting assistance for 35,000 NJ residents, while imposing punitive rules that would take food away from people who can't find a job or participate in a work activity.

The Senate version protects and strengthens SNAP, while also improving work training programs so that people can find good-paying jobs.

We've done a good job convincing New Jersey members of Congress to reject SNAP cuts, but they need to hear from us again to withstand any pressure that might cause them to change their vote.

Sign the petition [here](#).