

**Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey**  
**Weekly Witness | June 21, 2017**

*King Presenjit came to the Buddha with a problem: "I would like to become your disciple, but my old mother may feel hurt—she is too old." When the king was sitting in front of Buddha, one of his disciples (called a sannyasin) came by, touched Buddha's feet, and said, "I am going on a long journey. Bless me, please." Buddha looked at Presenjit and said, "This man is the answer to your question. He has killed his father and mother both!" King Presenjit was disturbed and thought: How can Buddha entertain a man who killed both his parents? The king said, "You praised that man even though he is a murderer!" Buddha smiled and said, "I mean he killed them metaphorically; what this sannyasin has learned is to kill his clinging and his dependence."*

Our gospel lesson reminds us that we are brothers and sisters of the whole human family. What Jesus envisions is nothing less than a new social order, an all-encompassing community based on discipleship, rather than biological ties. One where people are more valued than possessions, and love for our "biological" kindred gives way to meaningful relationships with all of God's people, even those most unlike us. Jesus calls us to align our mission with his own, to love our neighbor, and to build neighborhoods that welcome different social classes of people.

New Jersey has been struggling to undo economic and racial segregation of communities for a long time. In 1975 the [Mount Laurel Decision](#) was passed into law, and we are still working through its implementation. We know that towns are stronger when people of diverse socioeconomic classes live in the same neighborhood and attend the same schools; when bus drivers, day care workers, and security guards can raise their families alongside doctors and business owners. When neighbors know one another and build trusting relationships, crime decreases and all students do better in school. The Kingdom of God that Jesus envisions is one where all income levels can live side by side.

This past week, Senator Menendez, along with a bipartisan group of senators, introduced the [Family Self Sufficiency Act](#). This is legislation would make it more possible for families living in low income housing to receive job training, social service support, and other resources to advance their earning potential. As disciples named and blessed by God, we are called to create towns and neighborhoods that reflect God's gifts of diversity and love, and help our neighbors live into their potential.

On July 26, we need disciples and advocates from all over the state to join us in Washington, DC for a [Congressional Reception](#). We plan to eat lunch with the entire New Jersey congressional delegation and share with them our commitment to diverse communities where all income levels can be safe. We are asking for no more cuts to the HUD budget and for continued support for [affordable homes](#) in New Jersey.

Please register to attend the Congressional Reception [here](#). There is no cost for the day and buses will be provided for transportation. Invite your neighbors to join you in this advocacy ask!