

Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey
Weekly Witness | January 12, 2018

“Can anything good come from Nazareth?” is Nathaneal’s snarky [response](#) to Philip’s initial invitation to join him in following this man named Jesus, who Philip believes to be the one about whom the prophets wrote. You can envision the judgmental thoughts running through Nathaneal’s brain: “Philip wants me to drop everything to go see what this stranger from good-for-nothing Nazareth is doing and saying? Nazareth, of all places?!”

And yet, Philip invites Nathaneal again, saying “Come and see.” And because of the work of curiosity or doubt or the Holy Spirit, or some combination, Nathaneal joins Philip in a life-altering journey to meet Jesus, where his eyes are opened and he comes to believe. He accepts the invitations from Philip and Jesus to go out and do the good works of God, for which he was “fearfully and wonderfully made” (to quote the psalm for this Sunday).

From the story of Nathaneal, we hear a warning against dismissing the possibility of greatness because of where someone is from or how they were raised. Imagine if Nathaneal had shrugged off Philip’s invitation because he didn’t believe the Messiah could have the background that Jesus had. Picture all of the wonders he wouldn’t have seen if he didn’t take a chance on a guy from Nazareth. Nathaneal’s first act of following Jesus comes before he proclaims that he believes; it comes when despite his prejudices, Nathaneal is open to learning.

We too, like Nathaneal and Philip and Samuel before them, are called on by God to step outside of our own expectations and comfort zones and be open to listening and understanding. We are then called to speak truth to power, to care for our neighbors, and advocate for justice for all people. And from the lessons this Sunday, we are reminded that God is with us along that journey.

ADVOCACY ASK

Denying healthcare to children is like saying “nothing good can come from you” because it does not provide children with the access to care they need to grow into the intelligent, hardworking, and “wonderfully made” citizens they otherwise could become. According to a January 2018 report from the [New Jersey Policy Perspective](#) (NJPP), there are still 70,000 uninsured kids in New Jersey, with Hispanic children making up more than half of those without insurance. The NJPP lists universal healthcare insurance for children in New Jersey as one of its [top priorities](#) for 2018 and over the next few weeks we will be sharing ways to get involved in that initiative. In the meantime, Congress has not yet authorized continued funding for the federal Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). CHIP is a successful, bipartisan program that provides 9 million US children and pregnant women with comprehensive and affordable healthcare coverage. If CHIP is not funded, the work of insuring all children in New Jersey will increase to finding a way to insure those 750,000 children who are currently enrolled in CHIP, in addition to the 70,000 without insurance now.

[Call your representatives to tell them to immediately fund CHIP for five years.](#) Congress votes on January 19th to fund the federal government; long-term CHIP must be included when they do.