



CLERGY EMERGENCY LEAGUE

RESIST | RECLAIM | RENEW

Clergy Emergency League Statement Regarding Recent Abuses of Power Against Peaceful Protesters in Portland, Oregon

July 21, 2020

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kin(g)dom of heaven.” - Matthew 5:10

The Clergy Emergency League (CEL) is committed to resisting abuses of power and denouncing oppressive systems (#2 and #3 in our stated commitments¹). The recent events in Portland, Oregon, compel us to speak against the seizing and detaining of peaceful protestors without probable cause.

Since July 14, federal law enforcement officials, at the behest of the President of the United States, have been patrolling the streets of Portland and using unmarked vehicles to detain peaceful protestors.² On July 15, activist Mark Pettibone was walking to his car when federal officials, dressed head to toe in camouflage tactical gear, unlawfully arrested him without probable cause. He was not involved in any illegal activity and was not on or near federal property at the time of his abduction. Completely unaware of who it was that detained him, Pettibone was taken to the federal courthouse, both his body and belongings were searched, and he was asked to waive his Miranda rights to answer some questions. He lawfully refused and then was released abruptly with no explanation or documentation for why he had been detained.³ This is just one of several reports throughout the country over the past several months of activists seized and detained without probable cause by unidentified, uniformed, and armed individuals.

We acknowledge and grieve that many of our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) siblings know all too well the horror of being wrongfully detained. Called by our faith and the teachings of scripture,⁴ we who are the Clergy Emergency League denounce any and all abuses of power at the local, state, and federal levels of government. We recognize that the

¹<https://www.clergyemergencyleague.com/commitments>

²<https://www.opb.org/news/article/federal-law-enforcement-unmarked-vehicles-portland-protesters/>

³https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/07/17/portland-protests-federal-arrests/?fbclid=IwAR2xvXz0Jo1SBXvcW28F1SVLE9Rb_fWqkc6DmyBA5YiZBxtx-oG9Xt_ljKI

⁴For example, in Matthew 5:9-11, Jesus says: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.”

rhetoric of “law and order” is often the precursor to authoritarian rule. “Law and order” is a phrase that has been used to provide cover for, and support of, policies of violence and oppression that stem from the evils of racism, xenophobia, and other systemic ills. There is a deep and problematic irony when the rhetoric of “law and order” leads to the violation of the constitutional rights of peaceful protestors.

Now is not the time for silence. Now is the time for clergy and all people of faith to speak out against this abhorrent abuse of power. As Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum said in a statement: “If it can happen in Portland, it can happen anywhere.”⁵

Furthermore, it is sobering to note that these troubling events have happened as we received the news of the death of iconic civil rights activist John Lewis. Representative Lewis himself was arrested dozens of times protesting the same systemic ills that are being publicly lamented and challenged in places such as Portland. We are grateful for John Lewis’ tireless efforts for justice, and we who are the Clergy Emergency League are prepared to take up the mantle of justice that he worked every day of his life to promote.

Therefore, we who are the Clergy Emergency League commit to:

1. Name and denounce the actions of the federal law enforcement officers - and of the President who sent them - which are calculated and deliberate attempts to suppress, intimidate, and silence the voices of peaceful protestors exercising their First Amendment rights.
2. Call for the immediate removal of the responsible federal agents and/or agencies who have engaged in these practices.
3. Demand that law enforcement officials possess probable cause for any person they detain and follow the law that requires the reading of rights upon arrest.
4. Insist that law enforcement officials at all levels and of all jurisdictions be readily and easily identifiable to the people they are called to protect and serve. Accountability is impossible in an environment where the identity of law enforcement officials is hidden from the public when a citizen is arrested. It deliberately creates an environment of fear and intimidation.
5. Support those who are calling for justice, especially faith leaders in the Portland area and anywhere such abuses are occurring, and join their prophetic work.

About the Clergy Emergency League: The Clergy Emergency League (CEL) is a grassroots network of clergy seeking a unified voice to speak out against the abuses of power at

⁵https://www.wweek.com/news/courts/2020/07/17/oregon-attorney-general-sues-to-stop-federal-arrests-of-portland-protesters/?fbclid=IwAR3w0fkL4I2zOLVb_v4ruwGIPXiViEoYy_dkToPHXKb-FpMp8Diew-TIXGM

the federal, state, and local levels. Specifically, we resist the State's intrusion on the First Amendment's establishment clause and the right free speech, freedom of religion, and peaceable assembly; the fusion of politics with radical, right-wing, fundamentalist Christianity; and the growing power of racist white nationalism and a militarized police state. We provide support, accountability, resources, and networking for clergy to prophetically minister in their congregations and the public square in this time of political upheaval, social unrest, and partisan division. Learn more at www.ClergyEmergencyLeague.com

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- Rev. Barbara K. Peronteau (UCC), St. James Lutheran Church, San Leandro, CA
- Rev. Angela Shannon, Pastor, All Saints Lutheran Church, Bowie, MD
- Rev. Michael D. Kirby, Senior Pastor, Northminster Presbyterian Church, Evanston, Illinois, Presbytery of Chicago
- Rev. Karl W. Runser (ELCA), Pastor, Southern Clinton County Lutheran Parish, Lock Haven, Pennsylvania
- Rev. Tony Larson (PCUSA), Trinity Presbyterian Church of Surfside Beach, SC.
- Rev. Dr. John D. Copenhaver (UMC), retired, Winchester, VA
- Rev Cynthia Wunder (PCUSA), Lodi, WI
- The Rev. Tuesday J. Rupp, TEC-Dioecese of Connecticut, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Woodbury, CT
- Rev. Benjamin Masters (PCUSA), Hector, NY
- Rev. Dr. Kate Epperly (Christian Church - Disciples of Christ), Minister of Justice and Advocacy for Families and Children, Ministries Across Generations Team, Disciples Home Missions, Centerville, MA
- Rev. Mairi Renwick (PCUSA), Chaplain, Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, VA
- Rev. Daniel Burch (UMC), Carlisle, KY
- Rev Zach Sasser (PCUSA), First Presbyterian, Lafayette LA
- Rev. Austin Newberry (ELCA), First Lutheran Church, Louisville, KY
- Rev. Robert Abner (ELCA), Lutheran Church of the Cross, Muncie, Indiana
- Rev. Lauren Cain (UCC), First UCC, Royersford, Pennsylvania
- Rev. Prof. Barbara R. Rossing (ELCA), Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
- Rev Sandi Mansfield, St Jude's Episcopal Catholic Church of Canada
- Rev. Karen Sue Hybertsen (PCUSA), Ph.D., H.R.Â
- Jill Acree (PCUSA)
- Rev. Sharron Blezard (ELCA), Harrisburg, PA
- Rev. Dr. Jana Schofield (ELCA), Christ Lutheran Church, Ferndale, WA
- Rev. Rachel Anderson, (PCUSA), Lexington, KY
- The Rev. Mark Price (ELCA), St Paul Lutheran Church, Lodi, CA
- The Rev. Robin Lostetter (PCUSA), Honorably Retired, Naples, NY
- Rev. Anja Helmo (ELCA), Northlake Lutheran Church, Kenmore, WA
- Rev. Denise Stone (PCUSA), Pine City, NY
- Rev. Barbara Holzhauser (ELCA), Retired, Mentor, OH
- The Rev. Rebecca Crate (PCUSA), Sykesville, MD
- John Mangels, retired priest, Episcopal Church living, Colfax, California
- Rev. Suzanne Hall Stout (Christian Church - Disciples of Christ), New Beginnings Christian Church, Urbandale, IA
- The Very Rev. Sherry Black (Episcopal), St. Mark's Church, West Frankfort IL
- Kelly Couch (PCUSA), Lakeview Presbyterian Church, New Orleans, LA
- Amandus J. Derr (ELCA), Retired Pastor
- The Rev. Joanna Hollis (Episcopal), Christ Church, New Brunswick, NJ
- Linda Higgins (UCC), Midlothian, VA
- Rev. Dr. Susan M Strouse (ELCA), Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Burlingame, CA
- The Reverend Noel Bailey (Episcopal Church), Rhode Island

- The Rev. Sandra Bentz (ELCA), Temecula CA
- The Rev. Louise Hilbert (ELCA), Durham, NC
- The Rev. Deana M. Armstrong (UCC), Craig, Colorado
- The Rev. Andrea Roske-Metcalf (ELCA), Global Mission
- The Rev. Betsey Monnot (Episcopal Church), Sacramento, CA
- Rev. Katey Schwind Williams (PCUSA), Boise, Idaho
- The Rev. Rachel W. Thomas (Episcopal), Deep River, Connecticut