



# CLERGY EMERGENCY LEAGUE

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## For Immediate Release

### CLERGY EMERGENCY LEAGUE ISSUES STATEMENT REGARDING ABUSES OF POWER AGAINST PEACEFUL PORTLAND PROTESTERS

LEXINGTON, Kentucky, July 22, 2020 – Yesterday, in a statement signed by 350 Christian clergy, the Clergy Emergency League (CEL) denounced federal law enforcement’s attempts to suppress, intimidate, and silence the voices of peaceful protestors exercising their First Amendment rights in Portland, Oregon, and called for immediate removal of the federal agents and agencies committing these abuses of power.

“‘It can’t happen here,’ has become ‘It’s happening here, now,’” said Rev. Dr. Leah D. Schade, co-founder of CEL. “With federal troops dispatched to cities across the nation without the invitation or welcome of local leaders, the United States of America has taken a dangerous step closer to authoritarianism where the rule of law becomes the rule of the dictator. This is counter to the principles of democracy and this country’s Constitution. For people of faith, this escalation of State-sanctioned violence also violates the principles of love, respect, freedom, community, and trust that are the foundation of God’s moral law. The question for faith leaders at this time is – how do we respond?”

The statement is available [here](#).

Later this week, members of CEL will begin forming groups to respond locally to ongoing abuses of power and threats to vulnerable populations. “As faith leaders from numerous Christian denominations, our calling compels us to speak out when the State suppresses the voices of those who are crying for justice,” said Rev. Stephen M. Fearing, co-founder of CEL. “Last week, Rep. John Lewis died. He was arrested dozens of times for the ‘good trouble’ of standing up to the same systemic injustices that protestors are lamenting and challenging in places such as Portland. We commit to continue his prophetic work and advocate for the rights of those who disturb oppressive systems to seek a more just society.”

Founded in June 2020 following the president’s military incursion on St. John’s Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., CEL is a grassroots network of nearly 1,500 clergy speaking out against the abuses of power at the federal, state, and local levels. Specifically, CEL resists the State’s intrusion on the First Amendment’s establishment clause and the right to 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. CEL provides 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.

Contact:

Rev. Stephen Fearing | [pastor@bpcler.org](mailto:pastor@bpcler.org) | (404) 823-5926