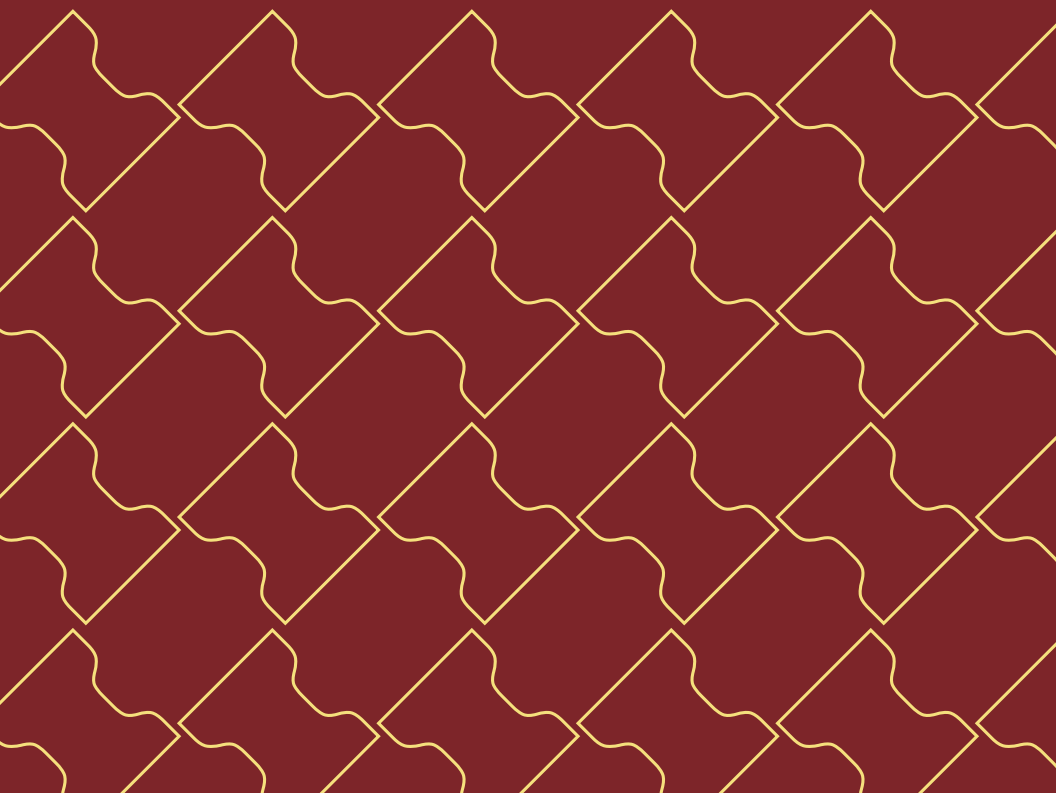
A PLEDGE FOR MORAL DEFIANCE

An American Encyclical

On Our Authoritarian Crisis



As American religious leaders in 2026, we are compelled by our various faith traditions to join together and name authoritarianism as an existential threat to the people we serve and the nation we love. This corrupt ideology is not new, but it has led us to a crisis now. Because we love our neighbors and our faiths, we are compelled to challenge the authoritarianism rising in the United States of America. Our witness against this authoritarianism is our religious obligation.

True worship demands public resistance.

Silence in the face of tyranny is complicit apostasy. We must act now to confront authoritarianism, and we must act together.

We write to confront authoritarianism because we recognize its danger. We feel its threat. War ravages sovereign nations. Poverty deepens. Immigrants, people of color, and those who are simply different from the favored few suffer relentless, calculated, and malicious attacks. At the same time, we witness how the fear instilled by authoritarian policies also narrows the world of the people who are told that these violent actions serve them, and we attest to the moral injury experienced by those who execute this violence. We are compelled to challenge authoritarianism as part of our work to holistically care for people.

We recognize that the authoritarianism we face is not the same authoritarianism we were taught to resist by our parents and grandparents who pledged, “Never again.” The idol we seek to name is an authoritarianism that learned from the failures of Hitler and Stalin, Pinochet and Pol Pot, Bull Connor and Andrew

Jackson. We write so that our faith communities might better understand the particular challenges and temptations of this moment, especially their spiritual and religious dimensions.

But we do not write simply to understand and name this threat. We also confess our complicity in the rise of authoritarianism, not only in our nation but within our faith communities. This crisis has not simply been imposed on us. Authoritarianism often exploits the dominant religion in any culture to win adherents. In the United States, it has come wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross. While the Christian leaders among us bear a special burden of responsibility, we confess that we who represent the vast majority of America's faithful share the responsibility for allowing a vocal minority to hijack the moral narrative in our public life. We write to declare unequivocally that privatized faith is dead religion.

The grand experiment of American democracy gifts those of us from different faith traditions the opportunity to share space and power. While it was largely Christian minorities who advocated for freedom of religion in the development of our Constitutional framework, their insistence that all people be both free from a religion imposed by the state and free to practice (or not practice) any tradition they choose has created the conditions that make it possible for us to know one another, learn from one another, work together for the common good in our public life, and write this encyclical to our communities with one voice.

Our religious traditions are not the same. We proudly represent communities that contain a wide range of political viewpoints. We share a commitment to nonpartisan political engagement

because we are convinced that some things are not about right versus left, but right versus wrong. As we look around the world, we see the dangers of both right-wing and left-wing authoritarian movements. We do not oppose authoritarianism because we share the same politics or the same religious traditions. We oppose the authoritarian creep of this country because the very soul of our nation is at stake if we bow to its demands.

Whenever a political ideology claims our ultimate allegiance, we lose the freedom to do the things that we believe are most important to us as humans—to worship God, love our neighbors, care for our common home, and build beloved community. We write to name the present authoritarian crisis, confess our responsibility, remember our power, and commit to shared action because we know the limits of politics. How we organize ourselves in society matters, and the choices our elected leaders make have real consequences. But all of our traditions attest that we lose something essential to our humanity if we concede to the demands of a political movement that requires our ultimate allegiance or promises salvation. We refuse authoritarianism because we love God, we love people, and we love the places we call home.

With this encyclical to people of faith in the United States, we join our voices to **pledge moral defiance** in the midst of our present authoritarian crisis. We invite all people of faith and conscience to join us by making this pledge public. And we invite any who will make this pledge to use this document of our shared learning and discernment as a catalyst for teaching, conversation, reflection, and shared action.

A Pledge for Moral Defiance

As a person of faith and conscience, I believe that true worship demands public resistance to authoritarianism and direct action to ensure our democracy works for everyone.

Guided by love for my neighbors and my community, I pledge to:

Reject authoritarianism and refuse to give any political ideology or leader my ultimate allegiance.

Repent of silence and complicity, recognizing that privatized religion is dead religion.

Stand in solidarity across diverse traditions to protect vulnerable groups from violent and malicious attacks.

Join my neighbors in naming voter registration, voter mobilization, voter protection, and support for election infrastructure as priority actions for all of our communities.

Defend freedom of conscience by ensuring all people remain free to practice—or not practice— faith in the United States.

I pledge to faithfully resist authoritarianism. I choose instead to worship none but the divine, love my neighbors, and build beloved community.

Initial Signers

Add your signature here: **www.moraldefiance.org**

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General Secretary, Reformed Church in America

Rev. Dr. SanDawna Gaulman Ashley
Synod Leader, Synod of the Northeast Presbyterian Church (USA)

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Naming our crisis

Any visitor to our nation's capital in 2026 can see that something has changed. When a core group of us met in Washington, DC, in August of 2026, we witnessed uniformed officers of the National Guard patrolling the streets and parks. The White House is obscured by temporary fencing and barriers, suggesting a state of emergency. Propaganda banners hang from federal buildings, bearing the image of the sitting president as if he were the lifelong ruler of a totalitarian regime.

These visual cues are more than mere symbols; they are signs of radical changes in the policy and practice of our government. The executive branch has ignored the power of Congress to levy tariffs and make war, and Congressional leadership has conceded to these abuses of power. The Supreme Court has ruled that the Voting Rights Act is no longer needed, and state legislatures have responded with gerrymanders designed to take seats from Black and Brown representatives in the American South. The President's personal lawyer has been confirmed as Attorney General by the US Senate, and the Department of Justice has ceased to prosecute corruption, instead targeting the perceived enemies of the administration. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has become the largest law enforcement agency in the world, with a national network of concentration centers. Beginning with the present administration's second term in 2025, scholars who study the erosion of democracy warn of a radical acceleration in autocratic practices.

We read about these radical changes from media trying to report "both sides" in a conflict where people are not playing by the

same rules. While we know the facts, it can be hard to discern the truth. Nevertheless, we experience its impact in the communities we know and serve. Masked men have raided our neighborhoods and sacred spaces, taking people we know and love without due process. Neighbors who have nonviolently challenged this radical practice have been gunned down in the street. Families who depend on nutrition assistance to feed children while they work low-wage jobs have lost their benefits as we have all watched grocery prices rise. Members of our communities who were able to have healthcare for the first time in recent years have lost coverage as the federal budget cuts that passed Congress in 2025 have begun to reach our states in 2026. While most Americans feel shell shocked and squeezed, we witness the blatant corruption of public funds being funneled to political insiders and the President's family and friends using public office to gain billions of dollars. The bizarre celebrations of America's 250th anniversary, broadcast from flashy sets and a gilded Oval Office, ring hollow.

But these are only the external signs of our present crisis. Too often they are not named clearly in our faith communities because religious leaders fear we will be seen as partisan or attacked as "too political" if we tell the truth about what everyone can see. For generations, our practice of the separation of church and state in the United States has entailed our commitment to neither speak for or against political parties or candidates. There is wisdom to this position as a way to create space for the debates that exist within a healthy democracy between people who share the same community of faith. But the authoritarian movement we face does not aim to win an open debate in our communities. Like

an abusive partner who tries to take over a counseling session or a bully who hijacks a committee meeting, authoritarianism claims to be the arbiter of truth and demonizes any who object to its lies. If we do not name this basic fact of our present crisis, we lie.

As people who've promised to preach the truth, we must challenge lies. The 2020 election was not stolen. Immigrants are not criminals and rapists, corrupting our communities. Poor people are not deadweight dragging our country into debt. It does not harm an economy to insist that corporations pay a living wage or that all people deserve healthcare. We do not need a strongman to save us from his manufactured crisis. These are lies that have been repeated to accelerate our present crisis.

That we ourselves struggle to tell the truth is an internal symptom of our shared crisis. As lying is normalized in public life, it becomes difficult to know and speak the truth anywhere. When corruption is flaunted at the highest levels of government, we struggle to explain to children why stealing from a neighbor is wrong. If people are disrespected by public figures because of who they are, the norms that make shared life possible in our rich and diverse communities begin to fray. While this is not unique to our present crisis, it is a consistent pattern of authoritarian movements in human history that they do more than shatter existing political norms. Authoritarianism interrupts the shared practices that remind us who we are. It not only makes it difficult to perceive the truth; it aims to obscure the distinction between truth and falsehood. Authoritarians want us to believe that they define truth.

How has a nation that fought the Nazis in Europe and waged a Cold War in the name of freedom, all the while celebrating the dissidents who challenged these authoritarian regimes, failed to name and effectively resist the rise of an authoritarian movement in our midst? We deceive ourselves if we do not remember that this ideology has been among us all along. While many Americans have always resisted authoritarianism, its lies fueled the imagination of our European ancestors during the genocide that our Native American elders call the first chapter of our shared story. Authoritarianism propped up the institution of race-based chattel slavery that fueled the rise of the US economy as a competitor with 19th-century European imperial powers. A delegation of Nazi lawyers traveled to the United States to study Jim Crow laws in the 1930s and found their "one drop" rule for racial purity to be too extreme. In the most basic sense, authoritarianism has been able to mount an assault on the tools of our government in the 21st century because it has been here all along. Yes, the United States helped defeat the Nazis in the 1940s. But our ideas of Manifest Destiny and "separate but equal" also inspired Nazi expansionism in the name of Lebensraum and antisemitism in the form of the Nuremberg Laws. The ideology we seek to name and resist has always been with us, making its demand for our allegiance.

It is worth noting that Germany in the 1930s and the United States in the 2020s also share this in common: We are democracies where an authoritarian movement gained control of the government through an election. Public opinion polls in the United States today reveal that two-thirds of Americans do not support the authoritarian actions we describe here and the lies

told to justify them. This is reassuring, but we must not forget that the same was true of public opinion in Germany in 1933—two-thirds of Germans did not support Nazi extremism when Hitler came to power. Authoritarians do not seek to persuade a majority. They exploit the vulnerabilities of imperfect democratic institutions to take control of government, then use those tools against the majority of the population to consolidate their power. The only thing that can reverse such democratic capture is a broad-based moral movement of citizens to reclaim the tools of our government.

Scholars of authoritarianism tell us that movements like the one that now controls our government consistently manufacture threats that position them as savior, then claim moral authority to defend democracy. They do not position themselves as the enemy of democracy, but as its defenders. While "pro-democracy" coalitions try to maintain the status quo, authoritarians exploit vulnerabilities to sow division and exploit the conflicts they encourage to justify emergency measures. The authoritarianism we face is fueled by a cultural and religious movement that blames some neighbors for the hardships that others experience and provides divine sanction for extreme measures to remove those who have been stigmatized from among us. Violent attacks on immigrants, indigenous communities, Black and Brown voters, queer and trans people, poor people, some women, and disabled neighbors are not transgressions that this authoritarian movement excuses; they are actions that authoritarians claim are for the good of the (their) people, in defense of (their version of) democracy, and in the service of (their professed version of) a divine plan.

As religious leaders, we understand that religion is central to the particular authoritarian movement that we face.

Confessing our responsibility

What sociologists describe from observation, we know from experience: Faith has power to shape the moral imagination of a community and unite us in common purpose, even against the headwinds of consistent opposition. This is why, long before authoritarianism took control of our government, it infiltrated our faith communities. Like the authoritarianism it enables, religious nationalism is an ideology that has always been present in our shared story, from the Puritans who waged holy war against Indians to the priests who taught the slave master's religion to the enslaved. In this particular moment, however, our authoritarian crisis has been facilitated by organizations that began in the 1970s to build a political movement that could organize the people who had resisted the civil and human rights movements around religion rather than race.

We confess that our institutions and their leaders were too slow to name this strategy, confront it as a moral obligation, and offer a compelling alternative moral vision for our shared life.

Sociologists have measured the growth of the ideology promoted by this political movement as both "Christian nationalism" and "white Christian nationalism" because of the ways this ideology exploits the assumption of whiteness and the cultural symbols of Christian faith. The Christians among us who have taken vows to proclaim our faith state unequivocally: Authoritarian

ideology hijacks our tradition's language and symbols. Christian nationalism is heresy. Christian nationalism intentionally misuses our faith to mislead, corrupt, and steal from our only Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Those of us who represent non-Christian traditions also want to be clear that our traditions are also susceptible to this kind of manipulation, and even in this US context where we have not been in the majority, our people can be drawn into the patterns of religious nationalism. Equally important to those of us Black, Brown, Asian, Native, and mixed is the often overlooked reality that our people are also susceptible to the cultural appeal of a religious nationalism that adopts the habits of whiteness, whatever the color of our skin.

We join to confess the real and present danger of religious nationalism because we know it impacts all of us.

This persistence of religious nationalism and clear evidence of its appeal across many communities lead us to ask deeper questions about the sources of its strength. Just as the addict's attraction to something that harms him exposes a hunger that is deeply human, we believe the rise of religious nationalism that has fueled our present crisis exposes a hunger for meaning that is particular to our moment. Psychologists tell us we are experiencing a loneliness epidemic in the United States. Rates of suicide, drug overdose, and self-harm indicate growing despair as a long-term trend. How can the future seem so grim for so many when we see continued economic growth, extension of life expectancy, and technological advances that seem to connect people in ways we've never experienced before?

Our experience working with people in faith communities suggests that our public institutions have failed to measure some of the indicators of well-being that are most important to people. While Gross Domestic Product has continued to grow, the total share of the economy for most of us has shrunk while a small number of people have become unimaginably rich. This economic inequality creates anger and resentment, leading people to mistrust a government where representatives of both parties supported policies that hollowed out the places we call home.

It grieves us to confess that we have failed to prophetically challenge and inspire political leaders from both parties to take up the cause of the poor and vulnerable that all of our traditions call us to keep before society for the good of the whole.

We take no pride in challenging today's authoritarian leaders or the bipartisan neoliberal consensus that opened the door for their appeal to disappointed and angry people. In tracing the story of how we as a people arrived at this place, we are confronted with our own tenure in leadership of the religious communities that were passed down to us.

When we were trying to climb the ladder, we did not spend enough time listening to the poor and neglected. When we were trying to grow our congregations, we neglected to build prophetic coalitions that could offer vision to our political leadership. When we were trying to build organizations and relationships that could influence those in power, a generation lost faith in their political leaders and many of them lost faith in us.

We join together in this public confession in hope that we might not only be restored to our sacred vocations, but also to the people in our communities who rightly feel abandoned.

Remembering our power

To confess our complicity in the present crisis is to own our responsibility. But if we and our communities have contributed to this crisis, then we also have the power to make different choices and contribute to a moral resistance that demands a better future for all of us. Drawing from our traditions and the wisdom they have instilled in us, we join our voices to remember our power and renew our commitment to public theology.

In Judaism, the concept of Tikkun Olam—repairing the world—offers an ancient framework for public theology. The Hebrew Bible structurally binds holiness to how a society treats its most vulnerable: the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. According to the prophet Isaiah, God explicitly rejects ritual fasting or religious practice that is decoupled from public justice. “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness ... to let the oppressed go free?” The Book of Deuteronomy issues the same value as an imperative: “Justice, justice shall you pursue.”

While all of our religious traditions emerged in a pre-democratic world, they share proto-democratic values that have grounded every moral movement toward a more perfect union in this nation’s history. While our language and core stories differ, each of our traditions testifies to the fundamental dignity of all people, the freedom of choice and conscience that is basic to the

human experience, respect for the rule of law, a recognition of the diversity of creation, the good of the stranger, the importance of the common good, and the notion that we are called into partnership with the divine in our work here on earth.

The Black prophetic tradition refuses to split personal piety from social righteousness as a direct challenge to the heretical compromise of the slaveholder's religious nationalism. In the American story, this is an especially potent resource to draw from as we seek to reclaim our power. Within the broader Christian tradition, the early Church Fathers and Mothers viewed the Gospel not merely as a ticket to heaven, but as a disruptive public force. They routinely used their voices to confront systemic greed, hoarding, and state-sanctioned violence.

Jesus launches his public ministry in the Gospel of Luke by declaring structural liberation: "The Spirit of the LORD … has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor ... to set at liberty those who are oppressed." Basil the Great preached: "The bread which you hold back belongs to the hungry; the coat, which you guard in your locked chests, belongs to the naked." "When we retain more than we need," John Chrysostom added, "we are taking what belongs to others.... It is not your own wealth that you distribute to the poor; you are merely returning to him what is his." The Desert Mother, Macrina the Younger, was equally clear about the economic vision of Christian faith: "No one should say 'our house' or 'our property' but rather 'our life' and 'our community'… for the common property of all is the right order of nature." These teachings empower Christians to refute those who claim that charity is only a personal obligation and confront the policies that keep most people poor while a narrow majority

suffers extreme wealth and the elevated sense of self that comes with the lies that have been used to prop up an unjust system.

Islam's foundational narrative is rooted in a public revolt against the predatory, elite-dominated social structure of seventh-century Mecca. The Quran establishes justice and the eradication of oppression as core spiritual imperatives that must be enacted in the public square. Surat An-Nisa elevates a commitment to public justice above familial loyalty: "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives." Surat Al-Ma'un declares religion false when it ignores social welfare: "Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense? For that is the one who drives away the orphan and does not encourage the feeding of the poor." Islam bans usury and mandates a systemic wealth tax to prevent capital from pooling only among the wealthy. As Surat Al-Hashr outlines, resources must change hands "so that it will not be a perpetual distribution among the rich from among you."

In Native American tradition, the Creator and Giver of Life animates a universe where all living things, mountains, and water hold absolute sacredness. Land is not a commodity for corporate hoarding, but a living sanctuary for prayer and communal harmony. Authoritarian destruction of sacred spaces is an assault on life itself, as the Apache Stronghold at Oak Flat and the Water Protectors at Standing Rock have shown us in recent years. Justice requires defending the local ecosystem, honoring the stories of right action, and fighting the spiritual lawlessness that lets corporate greed desecrate what is holy. True faith recognizes the experience of mystery and wonder in the world,

compelling all of us to resist corporate forces that treat life as a transaction.

The structural mechanics of authoritarianism stand in absolute contradiction to the foundations of democratic governance as outlined in the foundational texts of our common life in the United States. While we do not hold these texts as sacred, they do reflect values we share in language that is familiar to all of us. The Preamble to the United States Constitution explicitly establishes that the purpose of our union is to "establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity." Authoritarians actively subvert these goals. They replace the "general Welfare" with the interests of billionaire elites, dismantle "Justice" to protect the powerful, and destroy "domestic Tranquility" by manufacturing social divisions.

When nations abandon these foundational ethics, they invite existential collapse. Despite his deep complicity with abuses of slavery, Thomas Jefferson recognized this reality and articulated it as a vulnerability before the Divine: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever." This warning was later echoed and amplified by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who diagnosed the core failures of the nation through the lens of a triplet of evils: racism, economic exploitation, and militarism. At a moment when he was harshly criticized for being "too political"—by both his co-religionists and his civil rights allies—Dr. King accepted the burden of issuing a public indictment of a nation that hoards excess wealth while abandoning its moral duties: "If America does not use her vast

resources of wealth to end poverty and make it possible for all of God's children to have the basic necessities of life," he preached, "she too will go to hell."

The fight against these three evils demands an absolute rejection of state-sanctioned violence and war. Though Dr. King's prophetic obedience cost him his life, his wife, Coretta Scott King, expanded his prophetic critique just weeks after his murder by directly challenging the systemic violence embedded in the nation's priorities, offering a definition of violence that still stirs the conscience of any who are willing to listen. "Poverty is violence," she told those gathered for the Poor People's Campaign Solidarity Day in 1968. "Starving a child is violence. Suppressing a culture is violence. Neglecting school children is violence. Discrimination against a working person is violence. Ghetto housing is violence. Ignoring medical needs is violence. Contempt for equality is violence. And even the lack of will power to help humanity is a sick and sinister form of violence."

Even in the darkest hours of authoritarian overreach, a larger destiny governs human history. Theodore Parker first noted, and Dr. King famously popularized, the enduring truth of spiritual physics: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." This moral arc does not bend on its own. With divine assistance, we bend the arc. Strides toward a more perfect union require the deliberate weight of faith leaders, the courage of prophetic organizers, the fortitude of ethical elected leaders, and the relentless pressure of coalitions of citizens speaking truth to power and taking direct action to become the change we want to see in the world.

Our faiths offer powerful moral and spiritual resources for a robust public theology in this moment. We must reclaim these treasures and revitalize our teaching of them, even as we also recognize that our physical spaces have been part of the infrastructure of movements that have resisted authoritarianism here in the United States and around the world. We challenge houses of faith across the land to remember our power to host the movements that challenge authoritarianism and platform the call for moral courage to reconstruct democracy.

We must welcome these movements into our spaces, and we must move with our people into the public square to organize, protect civic spaces, and protest injustice. True liberation cannot occur in isolation; it requires intersectional solidarity across lines of faith, race, and class. The faith community has an essential role to play, but we cannot do it alone or in our silos. When we remember our power, we recall that we have always worked best when we have worked in coalition with people of other faiths, with other professions, with labor and civic groups, civil rights organizations, and mutual aid societies.

We are heirs of the abolitionists who built a moral movement to challenge chattel slavery and the women's suffragists who worked alongside them. We have learned from America's labor movements and from the nonviolent struggles of the 20th century how to unleash soul force and build fusion coalitions that confront the strategies of divide and conquer, creating space for the change we want to see even as we build power for the policies that could make that change easier for all of us. We have learned from Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, Sojourner Truth and

Mother Jones, Ella Baker and Harvey Milk, the Water Protectors, and the Moral Mondays movement.

We join our voices with these ancestors to declare that it is our moral responsibility to remember our moral power in this moment.

Committing to action

From this rich tradition and cloud of witnesses we have inherited a range of tactics that are needed for faithful action in the moment. We must pray and protest, march and organize, boycott and build power, nonviolently resist and creatively care, register voters and challenge election subversion. Our attention to authoritarian movements in other parts of the world and in the American South—many of which are organizationally connected to our present authoritarian crisis—have taught us that it is possible to turn the tide against democratic erosion, even after authoritarians have taken control of the tools of government. But it is not easy, and it becomes more difficult the longer democratic norms are interrupted. A consistent tactic of authoritarians is to attack any opposition and limit the means of public dissent. We join together to commit to use our power to take the maximum nonviolent action available to us. If we do not act now, we may not be able to later.

We acknowledge that surveillance, harassment, personal attacks, selective prosecution, investigations of organizations, and disinformation campaigns are among the tactics that authoritarians deploy not only to limit the actions of their targets,

but to instill fear that will compel others to obey in advance. When an authoritarian regime cannot silence you, it will try to persuade your friends to turn their backs on you. We join our voices to say that we will not let others who act to challenge authoritarianism be isolated. We will take action together, standing in solidarity with one another even when we cannot stand together in the flesh.

We contend that love in action is more powerful than any form of coercion or violence. This is not wishful thinking but the wisdom of our religious traditions and a lesson of successful movements to resist authoritarianism over the past century. When we act, we will act in the power of love. We will use every nonviolent means to block policies that are violent and those who support and promulgate them, but we will not hate the perpetrators. We refuse to believe that our neighbors cannot be won back from a movement that ultimately does not care about them. We pray even for those who have been deluded into believing that they are God's instrument to destroy the administrative state and restore an imagined former glory to this country. No one is beyond redemption, but to be saved from the ideology that has claimed their allegiance, they will have to lose the power that they have abused. As a loving family helps to free an alcoholic from the bottle that controls him, we will act to separate the leaders of US authoritarianism from positions of power in our society.

We will act to care for families who've lost their healthcare and families who've lost their loved ones to concentration centers on US soil and rendition centers around the world. With the resources at the disposal of our communities and organizations, we will act to bind up the wounds of neighbors who are being

crushed by the policy violence of an authoritarian regime. But our public theology refuses the false dichotomy that says the religious community acts to care for the vulnerable while politicians act to shape policy. Love compels us to petition our representatives, instruct our legislators, and demand justice from our leaders as an act of faithful devotion. We will persist in making public appeals for just public policy, even when those in power refuse to listen. We will not let our children grow up in communities that neglect to protest wrongdoing and call everyone to justice.

We will act to build coalitions committed to pursue the public goods that most people want and all of us need. We will lift up a moral agenda that checks public corruption, insists that wealthy people and corporations pay their fair share, guarantees all workers a living wage and all people a right to healthcare and housing, invests in public schools and care for our common home, protects the civil rights and freedom of all people, and ends unnecessary and unjust wars of choice that violate international law. We will insist that any political party or candidate for public office answer where they stand on these issues, and we will hold those who are elected to serve the American people accountable.

We acknowledge that a minority movement has been able to win control of our federal government because the number of people who do not vote in a national election exceeds the number of those who cast a ballot for any candidate. The reconstruction of democracy that we need requires a re-engagement with citizens who have opted out, largely because they do not believe their vote can make a difference in their daily lives. Once contemporary authoritarian movements control the tools of a government, they inevitably work to hold onto that power by subverting elections.

We already see this happening in the United States as government employees repeat lies about voter fraud, the federal government works to gain access to state voter rolls, county election boards are being raided by the Department of Justice, and the president threatens to declare a state of emergency that would delay or alter the 2026 midterm elections. In this context, we join together to name voter registration, voter mobilization, voter protection, and support for election infrastructure as priority actions for all of our communities. We encourage our members to volunteer as poll workers, and we bless them as they go to do this work. We will host registration drives in our communities, join community partners for get-out-the-vote efforts, and lead marches to the polls to conspicuously proclaim that voting is a sacred act and that no eligible voter should be intimidated or turned away from the polls.

We commit to these actions in hope. Another way forward is possible, and we must pursue it. But our commitment to these actions is not contingent on their immediate success. Faith shapes our moral imagination even when evidence suggests that our actions may not achieve their desired ends immediately. Those who concede to authoritarianism's demands are willing to win by any means possible because they have no hope beyond themselves and their own powers. But we who reject this ideology will not let the horrors we oppose transform us into that against which we struggle. We pledge ourselves to faithful action against this present authoritarianism, and we appeal to heaven and all that is holy to come to our aid and keep us in this time of trial.