Choices and Voices for Peace

Sept. 5, 2024

Two months from today, Pennsylvanians will head to the polls. The choices we make there will be a statement about the way we want to live together here and now and the kind of tomorrow we want to leave for our children.

We gather here as leaders of many faiths from communities all across the Commonwealth -- not to tell anyone how to vote on November 5th -- but to remind us all of the transformative power in the **daily** choice to treat one another with kindness and human dignity.

Seven weeks ago, our state was the site of a tragic shooting at a presidential campaign rally. We do not know the motive, but we do know that it was a violent example of our country's political unrest.

Violence is a language of despair; we stand together today because we want to speak in the language of hope.

We acknowledge that we as people of various religions and worldviews are not immune to division. We confess our histories with political and societal violence – acts of omission, commission, compliance and collaboration. We struggle still.

Yet, today, we commit ourselves to dialogue over division. To speak with a hope that is faithful to our traditions, recognizing that peace is not passive, but an active pursuit. One that requires courage.

Today, we call on our civic leaders to exercise responsibility in their rhetoric. To reject all calls for violence. To forge a brighter vision rather than fanning flames of fear.
Today, we call on followers of our faith traditions to join us in seeking understanding over assumption. To reach out to those with whom we disagree. To sit down together. To listen with an open heart and mind. To prioritize compassion over vindication. And, knowing the very real and sometimes deadly harm that comes from spreading falsehoods, to seek to be trustworthy in all we share.

Today, we encourage our fellow Pennsylvanians to choose hope over hate. To build bridges of understanding that reach toward reconciliation. To work together to create communities of peace, where all can thrive.

We come from different places and different traditions, but we stand together in hope -- hope for the possibility of tomorrows in which we will work together for the common good because today we stood together on the common ground of peace.