

Speech by Rev. Susan Schneider
Trinity Lutheran Church

June 30, 2018—National Day of Action
“Keep Families Together”

Since I’m a Lutheran pastor, it seems right to begin with a quote from Martin Luther: “God doesn’t need your good works, but your neighbors do.”

This is most certainly true.

Right now our neighbors need our voices, our tears, our anger, our votes, our advocacy. My core identity is that I am a beloved child of God, and I am convinced that everyone else is also a beloved child of God. That means each of you are beloved children of God. And it means all the kids and their parents who are fleeing danger to present themselves at our borders are beloved children of God. It means the guards and government employees who are enforcing inhumane laws at the behest of those who sit in halls of power are beloved children of God. And yes, it even means those who choose to remain oblivious to the catastrophic results of their brutal policies are beloved children of God.

Every single one of these beloved children is in peril right now—some from external forces threatening their lives. Some from dangerously risking the loss of their very humanity. I want to remind all precious children of God of another admonition from Dr. Luther: “Faith and love are always to be mistresses of the law, and to have all laws in their power. Since all laws aim at faith and love, none of them can be valid, or be a law, if it conflicts with faith and love. Where they conflict with faith and love they are to be done away with entirely.”

Well, my fellow children of God, we are face to face with a law that must be done away with entirely! We are face to face with a law that conflicts with faith and love. We must do away with this law and any law that inflicts suffering and hostility on families!

“The church is her true self only when she exists for humanity,” according to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor who encouraged German

Christians resisting the 3rd Reich. Well, Church, it's time to step up and be our true selves. It's time for us to exist for humanity. Right now, humanity—in all its disparate expressions—is desperate. We are our brother's keepers. We are our sister's and our sibling's keepers.

So we must lean into our true role, which Martin Luther King Jr. described as being the conscience of the state. We must join together in saying loudly, clearly, and ceaselessly: "What is happening to babies and their parents at our borders is cruel and malicious. It does not promote safety for anyone. It does not demonstrate the values of faith and love. What is happening is the result of an invalid law, and we will not rest until it is abolished."

Let us never tire of reminding all people that they are beloved children of God, worthy of respect, dignity, and justice. And let us never tire of seeking good for all of God's beloved children.