



Northern Texas - Northern Louisiana Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Bp. Erik Gronberg

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August 5, 2020

Dr. Frederick Douglass Haynes, III
Friendship-West Baptist Church
2020 W. Wheatland Road
Dallas, Texas 75232

Dr. Haynes and the members of Friendship-West Baptist Church:

As a faith leader in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex I am shocked and appalled by the actions taken on August 2, 2020 by the "Back the Blue" rally organizers. Their unauthorized use of your parking lot was made all the worse by the clear intent of some members of the rally to intimidate and provoke a response. You, the members of Friendship-West, and the community leaders present exercised remarkable restraint in encouraging them to leave without greater incident.

The co-option of church property is never acceptable by any group. This trespass is made even more egregious given the history of systemic and institutional racism in Dallas. By coming to Oak Cliff, the organizers of this event should have been aware of how their actions would be interpreted. While I understand some of the organizers have apologized, their actions need to be called to account. They and the broader Dallas and Metroplex community need to be made aware of why this action was unacceptable.

As a predominately white denomination the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and our synod are committed to anti-racist education and work. As a leader in my denomination, I commit to standing with you and to amplifying the voices of you and your church so the congregations in my care will hear your story and be challenged by your witness. I thank you for your vital ministry, including civic engagement, and pray that God will continue to bless this work, you, and your community.

In Christ,

Rev. Erik K.J. Gronberg, PhD, Bishop, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod, ELCA

cc: Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Rev. Doris Harris, St. John's Lutheran, Oak Cliff, Dallas
Rev. Todd Bruning, Mt. Olive Lutheran, Fair Park, Dallas
Rev. Franz Schemmel, Chair, NT-NL Synod Public Witness Team
Mr. Tom Blaney, NT-NL Synod Vice President

– In Mission Together

–En Mision Juntos

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