



The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

The Episcopal Church in Western Washington

www.ecww.org

May 31, 2026

Greetings to you in the name of the holy and undivided Trinity, one God.

On this day we gather to reflect on that which makes us distinctly Christian in our theology and practice: the belief that God exists in community. That God is in relationship within God's self. Additionally, we believe that the relationship within the Triune God existed before taking any action which brought about the cosmos. God chose to engage in creation so that God could breathe forth new relationships with the whole of creation—from the furthest galaxies of deep space to the microorganisms on the ocean floor. Even more, God formed humanity in God's own image.

I believe that image centers on our being connected too. As those who bear the *imago dei*—the image of God—we are called to be in relationship with God, one another, and the natural world. Relationships define both our humanity and the God whom we worship and serve. Jesus—the living Word made flesh—showed us this directly in how he lived among us, constantly deepening connections with others through his ministry, actions, and prayer.

The predominant culture of western industrialized countries, and especially our own, focuses on the individual above the collective whole. It is easy to succumb to the siren call that our individual needs and desires always take precedence over the needs and desires of others. That as long as we and ours are taken care of, what happens to others is of little or no concern.

This is antithetical to the way of Jesus. It is anti-Christ.

This past weekend, our current political administration announced a new policy that all those seeking green cards must leave the U.S. and apply from their home countries to do so. As reported, this policy—and many others that have preceded it in relation to immigrants, asylum seekers, and resident aliens—will separate families: spouses from each other, parents from children. With no regard for relationships or familial bonds, this administration seeks to further contempt for the other—that is, those who are not a part of the dominant culture or who are minorities of any kind—which has become one of the defining aspects of this administration.

This new policy, like the others before it, will greatly impact people within our Diocese. Amongst our clergy and lay members are those who have come to the United States desiring

a better life and those who fled atrocities in their home countries, who are in the process of receiving permanent residency and citizenship. If this policy is enacted as described—a significant departure from previous immigration policies—it will rip congregations, communities, and families apart. We are reminded by St. Paul in Scripture that we are all the Body of Christ and that we need each member in order to function. We are in relationship with one another in order to be Christ's presence in the world.

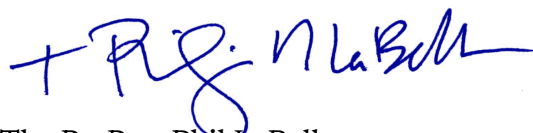
I entreat you in the name of the holy and undivided Trinity to respond. First, through prayer and contemplation. It is only in stillness and time connected with the Almighty that we ourselves can be changed and strengthened and then, as a result, take responsible action. The practice of contemplative prayer grounds our faith in relationship with the God who created us, and, as we've seen again and again, it has the power to change both us and our world.

Second, stay connected with others, especially those who are impacted by these decisions. Many of these are fearful, filled with uncertainty, and feeling alone. We must not fall prey to the belief that as long as we individually are fine, it really doesn't matter. We are called to be our siblings' keepers, to attend to their needs, and to stay in relationship with them. There are a myriad of ways to do this, and I encourage you to intentionally make space in your lives and worship communities to do so.

Finally, we must always respect the dignity of every human being. Whether we agree with a person's positions or not, we must never degrade others, because all of us bear the image of God. All of us have been created to be in relationship with each other. Jesus commanded his followers to love those they perceived to be their enemies and to pray for them. I would encourage us to be in relationship and conversation with all our neighbors, breaking down those walls that divide us. We will be known as Christ's followers through our love and care for all people.

Beloved, stay in relationship with God, each other, and this amazing world of ours; this is the reason God created us. No matter what happens in our nation or our world, as disciples of Jesus, our call is to faithfully remain connected through love and hope and peace.

May the Holy eternal Majesty, the Holy incarnate Word, and the Holy abiding Spirit, bless you now and in the days ahead.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "The Rt. Rev. Phil LaBelle". The signature is stylized and cursive.

The Rt. Rev. Phil LaBelle
Bishop Diocesan