

**A Pastoral Letter  
in Response to  
Recruiting Efforts of the Klan**

As pastors of churches in and around Mountain Top, we are at once grieved and dismayed to read recent local news of Ku Klux Klan recruiting in our county and a cross burning in our own Mountain Top community. We are grieved, because this anti-Christian and un-American organization claims to represent Jesus our Lord and the values of our nation. We are dismayed, because we are concerned that local media coverage of these events only serves to publicize the Klan's message of fear and hatred. As leaders of the religious community in Mountain Top, from Catholic, Protestant, and Independent churches, we stand together against the Klan's efforts in our entire region and are committed to welcome and celebrate our African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Jewish, Arab, and Asian neighbors and friends.

The Klan brands itself as a peaceful Christian organization protecting and promoting Caucasian culture and heritage and claims that the burning cross represents nothing other than the light of Christ. This is nonsense; symbols have meaning rooted in the history of their use, and the burning cross is today what it has always been, a symbol of terror used to intimidate nonwhites into subjugation. The Klan's methods and language clearly demonstrate their fear, hatred, and embrace of violence. In an October 18 Times Leader article, their Imperial Wizard claims the organization is nonviolent, but ominously adds, "If someone interferes, I can't tell you what's going to happen." One local member says, "We're called the Invisible Empire because nobody knows who we are. We could be your neighbor." This language is both violent and threatening; the Klan and other hate groups, in spite of claiming to be Christian, only demonstrate the potential of Scripture to be abused by evil. As followers of Jesus, we categorically reject the hatred, fear, and violence of the Klan as sinful, evil and anti-Christian.

Furthermore, we embrace one of the great gifts of the American tradition: the diversity that makes us great, our roots as a nation of immigrants, and our ongoing welcome of immigrants. The Emma Lazarus poem on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty names Liberty the "Mother of Exiles" and calls out in welcome to the world, . . . *Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

**We therefore denounce the efforts of the Klan  
as both un-American and non-Christian.**

**It is our hope that our community and churches will continue their long tradition of welcoming "the alien, the orphan, and the widow" (Deuteronomy 24:17-22) into a community "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Revelation 7:9). We devote our support to victims of racist violence and bias, and our leadership to making our churches and communities safe and welcoming for all.**

**Signed:**

**Rev. JP Bohanan, Christ United Methodist Church, Mountain Top  
Rev. Mark Dodson, Stairville, Slocum, and Faith United Methodist Churches**

**Rev. Joseph Evanko, Saint Jude's Catholic Church, Mountain Top  
Saint Mary's Catholic Church, Dorrance**  
**Rev. Michele Kaufman, Saint Paul's Lutheran Church, Mountain Top**  
**Rev. Brian Knorr, Mountaintop Family Center Church**  
**Rev. Tom Miller, Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, Mountain Top**  
**Rev. Jim Shanley, The Presbyterian Church of Mountain Top**  
**Rev. Jeffrey Tudgay, Saint Jude's Catholic Church, Mountain Top  
Saint Mary's Catholic Church, Dorrance**  
**Rev. Virginia Miner, Acting General Presbyter, Presbytery of Lackawanna**  
**Rev. Dr. Thomas L. Salsgiver, District Superintendent, Lewisburg District,  
Susquehanna Conference, The United Methodist Church**  
**Rev. Dr. Jeremiah J. Park, Resident Bishop, Harrisburg Area,  
Susquehanna Conference, The United Methodist Church**

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