

The following prayer accompanies Bishop Schol's call to action.

Most holy and gracious Creator,

Humbly we give thanks for you, a worker of wonders, a giver of life, the creator of us all. Thank you for reaching into the deep rich dark soil, for gathering gorgeous red clay, for taking handfuls of tan sand, and for gathering the warm brown earth to create your people. We are wonderfully made, each race, every person of every color reflects your image. Thank you for making us different and the same, for making us unique and like everyone else. Creator forgive us for hatred and bigotry. It is a sign of the continual struggle between good and evil, between honoring you as the creator and making the world after our own image. Give us the strength to love like you. Through Christ Jesus who taught us this same love we pray. Amen.



The United Methodist Church
of Greater New Jersey

New Disciples • Vital Congregations • Transformed World

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This Sunday and throughout the week, I call upon every congregation and disciple of Jesus Christ to give thanks for the Creator who made heaven and earth and every hue of humanity. I especially want you to give thanks for all people and their country of origin, especially for those in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

I have had the opportunity to visit eight countries in Africa and several in Latin America and the Caribbean. I have always been warmly received and found people to be just like those of us in the United States. Some are rich and some are poor but they are all people who are ambitious, hopeful and wanting prosperity, education, security and well being for themselves and their family.

I have also seen and experienced the deep struggles some of these nations have

faced including multiple years of drought and natural disasters, years of colonialism and dominance by other nations, racism and stereotyping. In the midst of these challenges, in my visits I received generous hospitality, was inspired by boundless hope and resilience and witnessed a deep desire to continue to improve, much like I find here in our own nation.

I will never forget an experience in Zimbabwe on one of my trips. One of the pastors traveling with me was invited to share a meal at the home of a Zimbabwean pastor following worship. They had a delightful chicken dinner. It was only after the meal, the American pastor found out that the Zimbabwean family had only two chickens and chose to butcher one to share for the dinner with their American guest. So, I call upon all church people, all civic leaders, all leaders of nations, rather than disparaging one another, rather than seeing ourselves as superior, rather than cheapening others, ourselves and our Creator by making hateful and harmful remarks about one another, to give thanks for our Creator recognizing we are wonderfully made. I call all of us to work together and to honor the Creator by honoring one another.

Today, I call you to prayer and to action. I call you to prayerfully change hearts and to act in concert with our Creator honoring every race, creed and people as a gift to be treated with dignity and equality. I call you to stand up when you witness injustice and anything that is not of God, and to let your voice be heard and your actions to be a testimony of the way of Jesus Christ.

Today, I also give thanks for the United Methodists of Greater New Jersey. You are a witness to others in our communities and throughout the world that we can serve together and honor one another. Our diversity makes our witness stronger. Our five largest congregations are ethnic congregations, we speak nine languages on a Sunday morning, we have more than 150 multicultural congregations and more than 100 cross racial appointments. You have already blessed the Creator with such a powerful witness. Thank you.

Keep the faith!

John

John Schol, Bishop

The United Methodist Church
of Greater New Jersey