

Roadmap to Resistance: What We Stand For

In June 2025, the FPC adult education class discussed the video series by Dr. Jemar Tisby: “Roadmap to Ruin: How the Church Can Resist the Dismantling of Democracy.”¹ Dr. Tisby made the point that churches have a duty to resist the current efforts to dismantle democracy because the policies being enacted were antithetical to the teachings of Jesus. Additionally, many of these policies have sought to exclude the voices of historically disenfranchised communities and silence society’s most vulnerable.

Following the conclusion of these classes, a group formed to look deeper into these concepts and discern what faithful responses and actions are appropriate for our church to take. This group (Roadmap to Resistance) is a subgroup of the Mission and Social Justice Committee and several MSJ members are a part of the Roadmap group. The group also recognizes that any actions such as putting forward public “statements” or otherwise from FPC would need to be approved by Session (e.g., town halls, ads, banners).

As recommended by members of the group and reinforced by Dr. Tisby, our group realized that it is not enough to be against something, but it is important to state what the group is supporting and advocating for in terms of action. This document is an attempt to make this statement.

Early on, it was recognized that the main Mission and Social Justice Committee works directly to help those among us who face hunger, homelessness, immigration issues, and many other challenges. Therefore, the tasks identified as those to be done by the Roadmap group are more in the areas of public statements, education, and advocacy for the policies that we believe are in line with the teachings of Jesus. And the group believes that in today’s world this includes resisting efforts that undermine democracy since such efforts have been shown to increase the suffering of the most vulnerable among us as well as are intentionally meant to limit public participation and disenfranchise historically marginalized communities.

To make a statement of what the Roadmap group stands for, we turn to Matthew 25:34-41 (attached). FPC has adopted the PC(USA) designation of a Matthew 25 church. Jesus’ parable gives us guidance for how we must live today and warns that there are consequences to our inaction. In June 2021 an FPC anti-racism group was pleased to be

¹ See “Our Role in Resistance,” Adult Education class series, First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe, July 13, 2025. Webpage post: <https://fpcsantafe.org/our-role-in-resistance/> (videos and handouts for series).

addressed by Rev. Denise Anderson from the Presbyterian Mission Agency in Louisville and the Co-Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA).² Rev. Anderson's message to that group included her take on Matthew 25 emphasizing the need to look at what those words mean in today's world. As examples, she noted that "hunger" can refer to food deserts created by policies and economic goals indifferent to certain communities, "thirst" can refer to the right to clean water, "naked" means to be exposed and vulnerable, "sick" can suggest the need for health care for everyone, and "in prison" can encourage us to look at mass incarceration and the school to prison pipeline currently in place for people of color.

Following Matthew 25 and this modern interpretation, we believe we should support and advocate policies in our country that would:

- Feed the hungry—this includes ensuring that all persons have access to adequate amounts of nourishing food that is safe and free from contamination. Further, environmental efforts to mitigate climate change are critically important to feeding people in the future.
- Give drink to the thirsty—this supports the need for adequate amounts of clean water, not poisoned by cost-cutting public utility measures or contaminated by pesticides. It argues for water conservation so there will be enough for all. We also add to this the need for clean air for all persons, regardless of their economic status and geographic location.
- Welcome the stranger—this suggests that we support fair and compassionate immigration policies and care for the physical and psychological needs of immigrants and refugees.
- Clothe the naked—using the interpretation of "naked" as exposed, we must not only provide clothing for those in need but also support policies that provide adequate and safe housing for those without homes.
- Take care of the sick—we must support policies that provide adequate health care for everyone; work for medical prevention and treatment practices based on the best knowledge we have today and not on political whims; and work to ensure that racial, social and socioeconomic barriers to good health be eliminated.
- Visit [care for] the imprisoned—we must not forget those who are imprisoned, some of whose prison terms are determined more by societal bias than by their personal

² Rev. Denise Anderson, Dismantling Racism Class, First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe, June 11, 2021, Video recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEEd5GwYuVe0>, (see from 16:23 through 24:32).

actions. We need to support just and unbiased laws and the proper execution of those laws, and we need to support justice for immigrants. Any necessary detentions should provide clean and safe living areas, adequate and nutritious food, and health care.

At this time in our nation's history the movement toward autocracy is threatening the policies and programs that would support what we believe Jesus would have us do. Therefore, we need to resist the dismantling of democracy and further support policies that recognize the human dignity of all persons, who we know are beloved children of God.

Matthew 25:31-41 (NRSV)

The Judgment of the Nations

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’

⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”