



## St. Luke's East Hampton Reflections from Fr. Ben

January 29, 2026

### From the Rector

The Baptismal Covenant is the de-facto mission statement of the Episcopal church and serves as the Episcopal definition of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. The Baptismal Covenant (BCP p. 304-205) includes a statement of belief which is followed by five promises to live that belief out. The last two promises, to love our neighbor and to strive for justice and peace and respect the dignity of every human being, are at the core of Christian life and - as seen in the witness of thousands last weekend – are at the core a Christian response to events in Minneapolis, Portland and troubled areas around the world. Though how each of us may respond might differ, not responding is not an option. In the words of our bishop,

*"This is a time for the people of God to stand unequivocally for justice and for the dignity of every human life. I urge you to remember Paul's admonition "to look on the needs of the saints as your own." Act, pray, and respond in every way you can to oppose what is evil and to protect what is good. Silence in the face of injustice is complicity; do not remain silent. Stand with those who suffer, offer support to those in need, and pray for healing, reconciliation, and hearts transformed by Christ's love." - The Rt. Rev. Lawrence C. Provenzano, Bishop of Long Island*

I spent 18 years in Maine working with refugees and asylum seekers on a daily basis. I listened to their stories and learned about their lives. Almost every immigrant I met with was legal. Almost every one of them was also in legal limbo, waiting for hearings that were backlogged as long as five years, stuck without a work permit and forced to suffer indignities of social services rather than using their gifts and skills. They were willing to go through all that in order to give themselves and their families a chance at the American dream. My other St. Luke's gave them simple things like diapers and food and winter coats and boots. It also gave them a warm welcome in a world where that was sometimes hard to find.

I have been at the tip of the spear of migrant operations, serving on a Coast Guard cutter that picked up boat people at sea. These people were not only saved from drowning, they were also given clothing, food, and health care by men and women without masks, in uniforms with their names clearly visible. That experience showed me that it is possible to follow laws and legal procedures and still treat others with kindness and respect. We can debate and discuss and disagree on immigration policy. As Christians, our task is to make sure that whatever happens is done with dignity, justice, and love.

If this sounds like getting political, I suppose it is. The Constitution does not guarantee freedom from religion. It guarantees the free practice of it. Our country is in a time of crisis. People are being shot in our streets. Injustices are happening before our eyes. In moments like this, we are called to put our faith in action. How you and I do this might differ. Do something, however, we must.