

A message from Bishop Bickerton

January 25, 2026

I write these words tonight, Jan. 24, 2026, with a very heavy heart.

Her name was Renee Macklin Good. She was fatally shot while in her SUV by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer on January 7 in Minneapolis, MN. She was 37 years old.

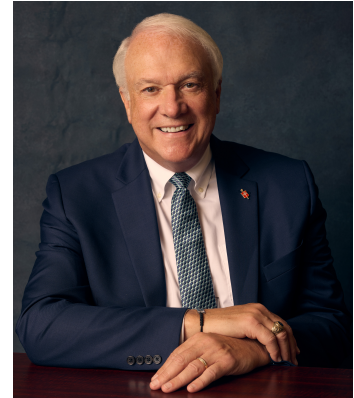
His name was Alex Jeffrey Pretti. While attempting to assist a woman who had been pepper sprayed, he was shot today by federal border patrol officers. He was an ICU nurse at a Veterans Administration hospital in Minneapolis, MN. He, too, was 37 years old.

My heart is heavy tonight, as it should be, that family members have lost loved ones and lives have been ended prematurely. My heart is heavy tonight, as it should be, because these two fatal shootings should have never happened.

But the heaviness in my heart tonight is more grievous because, in all likelihood, in just a few days or weeks, there will be another name on this list. And then another. And another.

Should I write a letter every time this happens? Perhaps I should. But letters penned from the comfort of my home seem all too shallow and ineffective. The words quickly fade as the stories of unjust and unnecessary acts of violence continue all around us. There must be something more.

Last week I had a conversation with Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey. Our conversation centered on all that is going wrong around us but, more importantly, we talked about how we might find



Bishop's Office

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton

Rev. Ximena A. Díaz-Varas

Assistant to the Bishop

978-682-8055 ext. 175

xdiaz@neumc.org

Gwen Junghanss

Bishop's Executive Secretary

Phone: (978) 682-7555 ext. 250

Fax: (978) 682-9555

BishopsOffice@neumc.org

creative ways to unite church and state to mobilize our people and meet the needs of the most vulnerable. It was a necessary conversation, and we pledged to have more—quickly. It was a good meeting. But there must be something more.

Not long ago I found myself in a conversation with another high ranking and experienced politician. We expressed mutual frustration over the very loud silence and ineffective pushback by politicians who oppose what's taking place in our country. I posed a critical but simple and genuine question: Where will the difference be made?

Their answer was also very simple and genuine: If we wait for high-ranking politicians to try to institute the changes necessary, we will find ourselves simply waiting and becoming more frustrated by the silence and the inaction. The answer, they said, is in a movement from the bottom up. The real change will happen when people in towns and communities and municipalities say, "*Enough is enough*," and rise up to show how much they want to see a different country, a different world.

Tonight, I write an open letter to the people of the New Hope Episcopal Area, the churches, the clergy, and the laity of New England and New York. This is not a statement or a position paper. It is a challenge.

Some of us are protestors. Some of you do it well. It comes naturally to you to participate in organized protests. It is an important action, and it is time for towns and communities to show how many of us are unhappy with the way things are. Training in non-violent resistance is critical and approaching protesting with the right objective in mind is essential. We must bring the core values of who we are as United Methodist Christians, finding ways, clear and intentional ways, to protest in love. Anything less than that is just what some are hoping for – chaos, unrest, and a reason to limit our rights and freedoms. If you protest, do it the right way and consider doing it now. But it's not enough.

Some of us are providers. Some of you do it well. It comes naturally to you. In nearly every town in this Northeast corridor there is someone who is afraid, so afraid that they do not come out. They are not

working or grocery shopping or attending school. They fear their home will be invaded and are terrified every time a whistle blows. They need someone to know their name, someone to have empathy, someone who is willing to help provide for their basic needs. Someone to be a friend. These personal connections offer a sense of hope amid great fear. Every church has some capacity to collect food, cook food, deliver food, take a child to school, check on a neighbor, and make a difference. If you are a provider, provide, and consider doing it now. But it's not enough.

Some of us are community organizers. Some of you do it well. It comes naturally to you. The ability to pull communities together from different denominations or individual agencies is of critical importance in these days of uncertainty and fear. To embrace the concept that we are stronger together is to pool our passions and our resources in a way that will provide a greater impact for the people who need it most. The need is glaring in some settings, more subdued in others, but it is present everywhere. If you are a community organizer, organize, and consider doing it now. But it's not enough.

Some of us are pray-ers. Some of you do it well. It comes naturally to you. Believing in and evoking the presence of God during times when there are few or no answers is of critical importance. In my last local church, one of our most influential leaders suffered a crippling stroke. When I visited with her, she lamented over how she would not be available to our church in what was a critical time for leadership. In our conversation I reminded her that perhaps her role was changing and that she could become our chief "intercessor" in prayer. She had the capacity to pray us through. And she did. I am convinced that her prayers bolstered and blessed the leaders of that church at one of the most important times in our history. If your gift is praying, it is time for you to pray, intentionally pray, and consider doing it now. But it's not enough.

All of us are residents of the United States of America. Those of you that are happy with the current state of affairs will not appreciate this letter. Perhaps you have already stopped reading it.

But for those of you who are not happy with the way

things are going, it is time for us to do something that is of critical importance. Whether we are Democrat or Republican, progressive or moderate or conservative it is time to declare that something is not right in our country.

Any time that anyone anywhere is shot, whether by an ICE official or a mass shooter, something is wrong. Any time injustice emerges, pain is inflicted, harm is done, there will be debate and disagreement. But here's the bottom line: If you do not agree with the current direction of our country, dividing ourselves politically and theologically will not help. We must demonstrate to ourselves and to the world that different people who think differently can work together for the common good. If you are a resident, it is time for us to say, "*Enough is enough*" and pull together to make a difference now when a difference is desperately needed.

Throughout this letter I have said that any particular step by itself is not enough. It's not enough because we need everyone's gifts and abilities to impact the change we long for.

Protesters criticize those that pray and those that pray criticize those that organize. Providers are called naïve and politicians are accused of being cynical. And I believe that's just what some want – disagreement, chaos, and disunity. As long as that continues internally, the change so many of us long for externally will never take place.

Please do not point the finger at those who respond in different ways. Point the finger at the problem and stay centered on the issue. Focus intentionally on how your gifts can be used in collaboration with others to get the job done. That's leadership. That's focus. That sets the stage for making a difference. That's embracing the reality that none of us can solve this alone. But together we might just stand a chance to recreate a "*more perfect union*" that, as the founders of our country wrote, "*would establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.*"

That's not unlike what Jesus himself prayed, "*The glory that you have given me I have given them, so*

that they may be one, as we are one. I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:22-33)

Hearts are heavy this night. But in the midst of our heaviness, let us band together as one body, bound in purpose, conviction, and love to make the difference we can make.

The Journey Continues, . . .

Thomas J. Bickerton



Resident Bishop, New Hope Episcopal Area



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