

AN UNWELCOME WORD OF MERCY

Bishop Mariann Budde's prayer is part of long tradition

Much has been made of Elon Musk's salute at Donald Trump's inauguration, which eerily appeared like the infamous "Sieg Heil" of the Nazi era. Whether it was so intended is a matter of debate and was strongly denied by Musk himself.

There is another and much more critical comparison to be made to the Hitler era that should be noted and that is to the *Kirchenkampf*, or "church struggle" over control of the German church from 1933 to 1945.

One side of the Protestant church was known as the *Deutschechristen* (DC), or "German Christians" who were generally supportive of Hitler, including hanging the Nazi flag in their churches.

The much smaller group went by the name *Bekennedekirche* (BK) or "Confessing Church," so named for the Barmen Declaration (or confession) of 1934. Largely written by Swiss theologian Karl Barth, the Barmen Declaration in essence said that the church has only one "Führer" — and it wasn't Hitler. (Hitler was actually not named, but the intent was obvious.)

The work of the BK movement was made famous through the martyrdom of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, executed on personal order of Hitler shortly before the end of the war. The book he wrote prior to his imprisonment, *The Cost of Discipleship*, is often considered one of the classic texts of Christian theology.

Equally influential in the BK movement was Martin Niemöller, a Berlin pastor who was the primary instigator of the 1934 Barmen conference and who was sent to a concentration camp in 1937 for his outspoken opposition to Hitler. Niemöller is best known for the saying that begins, "First they came for the socialists and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist..."

And it was Niemöller who pushed the *Evangelishe Kirche Deutschland* (EKD), the primary Protestant church of Germany, to issue the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt in 1945, stating in part, "Through us infinite wrong was brought over many peoples and countries."

With that confession the EKD essentially admitted that the BK members more faithfully represented the Christian faith while those affiliated with the DC churches made the wrong choice.

Our version of the *Kirchenkampf* is being played out today and became evident in the aftermath of the prayer service held on the morning after the inauguration, Jan. 21, at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

In that service, Episcopalian Bishop

Mariann Budde courageously and modestly asked the newly installed President to show mercy on the vulnerable who lived in fear, including gay, lesbian and transgender children and workers without proper documentation.

The Rev. Budde went on to say, "... the vast majority of immigrants are not criminals. They pay taxes and are good neighbors. They are faithful members of our churches and mosques, synagogues, gurudwaras and temples. I ask you to have mercy, Mr. President, on those in our communities whose children fear that their parents will be taken away."

The president was not pleased by the sermon, to say the least. But it is not Trump's reaction that concerns me. It is the response of religious leaders who were quick to condemn the bishop that I find most worrisome.

Franklin Graham labeled Budde as a LGBTQ+ activist who hates Trump. Sean Feucht, a prominent promoter of Christian nationalism, posted on X, "We were all cringing in the room along with the President with how outrageous this was! This is not a church and she is not a pastor."

Lucas Miles, senior director of Turning Point USA, was quoted in the *Washington Examiner* saying, "... a woke clergy member hijacks a church service to promote partisan rhetoric, personally attack the President... and distorts the truth about illegal immigration."

Pastor John Amanchukwu, a staff contributor with TPUSA, told the *Examiner*: "Many fear a wolf in sheep's clothing, but there is nothing worse than a wolf in Bishop garments. She's heretical, diabolical ..." and televangelist Mark Burns posted on X, "Her partisan lecture was inappropriate and embarrassing."

In fact, Budde did not attack the president in any manner, and her rhetoric was rooted solidly in the Biblical tradition of speaking truth to power. Fortunately, support from her colleagues, other Christian leaders and everyday folk in pews across the country, has been strong.

There is nothing new about Christians lining up on opposite sides of political debate nor of preachers like Budde challenging a president with appeals to the Gospel. That is the job of a competent preacher. The lesson of the *Kirchenkampf* is clear — only one side is faithful to the Gospel. I vote for mercy.

Dan Bryant is an ordained minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and a resident of Eugene since 1991. The opinions of this article are his own and do not represent any organization with which he is affiliated.



REGAN MIRIAM LEE


Regan Miriam Lee, born March 14, 1954, to Natalia F. Galvani and John "Jack" Lee in Los Angeles, California, died August 13, 2024, in Eugene, Oregon. Regan was a painter, poet, teacher and an explorer of life's great mysteries. She is survived by a husband, family and friends.

She was loved: She is missed.

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THOMAS A. BROWN

MARCH 6, 1950 - JANUARY 22, 2025



Thomas A. Brown passed away on Jan. 22, 2025, at Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend in Springfield, Oregon.

Tom was born in Upland, California, to Jeanne M. Brown and Leonard C. Brown, the third of four children. He is survived by his two older sisters, Martha and Susannah, his younger brother, Josef, two adopted sons, Chris and Joe, his granddaughter, Mystery, and a large extended family.

Tom grew up in California. As a child, Tom's inherent honesty, generosity and compassion earned him the family nickname, "True Thomas." His life was a manifestation of these qualities.

Tom graduated in 1968 from Sequoia High School in Redwood City, California. He went to work in the Alaskan fishing industry at an early age where he learned the skills of welding and refrigeration maintenance. He later relocated to Seattle establishing his own refrigeration maintenance and repair service, Arctic Air.

Throughout his life, Tom pursued his avid interests in fabrication and invention of useful and practical things such as small fishing boats or e-bikes to mention a few. His family and friends came to count on Tom as the guy who could fix or even invent just about anything. Tom was also a gifted photographer, manifesting an impressive body of work, some of which has been shown in galleries around Seattle and Eugene. He called his photography business, As Eye See It.

As a Eugene resident since 2005, Tom will probably best be remembered for his work on behalf of local and national social and political causes. He was committed to social and environmental justice, taking a central role in various local advocacy groups.

Throughout his life, Tom attracted diverse, close-knit groups of dedicated friends who could easily be described as an extended family. In fact, it could be said of Tom, that he found his "family" wherever he roamed in his life's journey. It is a testament to his kindness and generosity to learn how widely respected and appreciated he was. He will be sorely missed.

Family and friends are invited to bring remembrances and pot luck lunch offerings to a Celebration of Life, 11 am to 1 pm, March 8th at Theo's Coffee House, 199 8th Avenue, Eugene.

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