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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**New England Episcopal bishops respond with one voice to President's "cynical" photo-op by calling out "the abomination of continued oppression of and violence against people of color in this nation"**

What President Trump did in front of St. John's Episcopal Church, Lafayette Square on the evening of June 1 was disgraceful and morally repugnant. Displaying a Bible from which he did not quote, using as a mere backdrop an Episcopal church where he did not pray, and – more callously – ordering law enforcement to clear, with force and tear gas, a path through demonstrators who had gathered in peace, President Trump distorted for his own purposes the cherished symbols of our faith to condone and stoke yet more violence.

His tactic was obvious. Simply by holding aloft an unopened Bible he presumed to claim Christian endorsement and imply that of The Episcopal Church. Far more disturbingly, he seemed to be affecting the authority of the God and Savior we worship and serve, in order to support his own authority and to wield enhanced use of military force in a perverted attempt to restore peace to our nation.

His actions did nothing to mend the torn social fabric of our nation. Instead, they were a blatant attempt to drive a wedge between the people of this nation, and even between people of faith. No matter where we may stand on the partisan spectrum, we, as Christian leaders called to proclaim a God of love, find his actions repugnant. Jesus taught us to love our enemies, to seek healing over division, and make peace in the midst of violence.

Our church may rightly feel outraged and insulted by having the symbols of our faith used as a set prop in a cynical political drama. The real abomination before us, however, is the continued oppression of and violence against people of color in this nation. Let us reserve and focus the energies of our indignation to serve our Lord Jesus Christ's higher purpose: to extend love and mercy and justice for all, and especially for those whose life, liberty, and very humanity is threatened by the persistent sin of systemic racism and the contagion of white supremacy.

[MORE...]

The Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens, Bishop Suffragan, Connecticut  
The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas, Bishop Diocesan, Connecticut  
The Rt. Rev. Thomas James Brown, Bishop Diocesan, Maine  
The Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates, Bishop Diocesan, Massachusetts  
The Rt. Rev. Gayle E. Harris, Bishop Suffragan, Massachusetts  
The Rt. Rev. A. Robert Hirschfeld, Bishop Diocesan, New Hampshire  
The Rt. Rev. W. Nicholas Knisely, Bishop Diocesan, Rhode Island  
The Rt. Rev. Shannon MacVean-Brown, Bishop Diocesan, Vermont  
The Rt. Rev. Douglas J. Fisher, Bishop Diocesan, Western Massachusetts

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*Province I of The Episcopal Church comprises the seven Episcopal dioceses of New England.*