



June 29, 2025

## This Is Who We Are

Every time a horrific incident takes place in our country that should move us to serious introspection, the refrain rings out: “this is not who we are”.

Here’s the hard truth: this *is* who we are.

We are a country where shocking political violence is on the rise.

Where two Minnesota lawmakers and their spouses are shot in cold blood at their homes, and two of them died.

Where two Israeli embassy staffers were shot and killed in Washington, D.C.

Where a Pennsylvania Governor’s home was set on fire and the husband of the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives was bludgeoned with a hammer at his front door.

Where insurrectionists stormed our nation’s Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Where judges and local school board members and other public servants are subject to increasing threats.

We are a country where immigrants are ‘disappeared’ from our streets, referred to as ‘aliens’, and rounded up in workplace raids.

We are a country with a sordid history of racial violence and an ongoing reality of white supremacy.

We are a country that has a dangerous preoccupation with guns.

We are a country bitterly divided, where civil conversation amidst differences of opinion is all too rare.

We are a country where loneliness has become an epidemic.

This *is* who we are.

AND... **This is not who we have to be.**

Confession is a central practice in the Christian faith. It requires us to acknowledge the ways in which we’ve strayed from God’s vision for us and all of Creation, to own up to our individual sin and to our collective sin as a wayward people. And then it invites us to repent, to “lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely” (Hebrews 12:1) and

move with intention to a new way of being, a fresh witness in the world.

This moment in our nation is one that calls us all to confession and repentance. It demands that we name with utter clarity the difficult truths about who we are and what we’ve become. It can be an opportunity for us to turn a corner and find a new way forward together. Or we can shake our heads in sad disbelief, and allow it to become an opportunity squandered, thus signaling our acceptance of the bitter status quo.

There is ample evidence in our nation’s current events that we are far from what God intends. We are doing harm to one another. Justice is in short supply. Grief grips us. We have forsaken our love of neighbor and left mercy in the dustbin.

This is who we are. This is not who we have to be.

- The Rev. Shari Prestemon

UCC Acting Associate General Minister/Co-Executive of Global Ministries



## From the Addiction & Recovery Taskforce: Children at Risk

“Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs) are a group of conditions that can occur in a person exposed to alcohol before birth. These conditions can affect each person in different ways and can range from mild to severe. People with FASDs can have lifelong effects, including problems with behavior and learning as well as physical problems. FASDs are preventable if a developing baby is not exposed to alcohol.

There is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy or when trying to get pregnant. There is also no safe time to drink during pregnancy. Alcohol can cause problems for a developing baby throughout pregnancy, including before a woman knows she's pregnant. All types of alcohol are equally harmful, including all wines and beer.” (CDC)