

Bishop Mariann Budde: A Plea for Mercy and a Call to Action

For the Leader: While reading through this lesson plan, take the pulse of your group. What is your context? What are folks ready to hear? What are they ready to talk about? What are they ready to do? Who is represented in your group? Who is vulnerable? Reflect on these questions and apply the parts of this lesson that best fit the needs of your community of young people.

INTRODUCTION

January 20 was Inauguration Day. A new president and vice president took office and immediately signed executive orders that will have a tremendous negative impact on immigrants and asylum seekers, trans and nonbinary people, and the environment. The president also pardoned many of the January 6 rioters, is ending and restricting job protections for federal workers, and has withdrawn the United States from the World Health Organization. In the midst of these events, the traditional inaugural prayer service was held at the Washington National Cathedral on Tuesday, January 21. Episcopal priest Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde preached, and the president, vice president, and their families were in attendance.

HISTORY OF THE INAUGURAL PRAYER SERVICE

The inaugural prayer service is a tradition that began in 1933 after Franklin D. Roosevelt's election. It was originally held at the Washington National Cathedral, later moved to various locations around Washington, D.C., and then returned to the Cathedral in 1985 and 1989. Since 2001, it has been held consecutively at the Cathedral for each inauguration. This interfaith service of prayer takes place the morning after the inauguration, bringing together faith leaders from diverse traditions.

The Washington National Cathedral shared that this particular service was "a service for the nation, not any politician or political party. This service was designed to pray for unity, reconciliation, and bridge-building in our divided nation."

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Choose one (or more) of the following Revised Common Lectionary texts for this Sunday, January 26, to draw connections between the Bishop's message on unity and speaking the truths of God's word.

Nehemiah 8: This text highlights a moment of communal worship and teaching as the priest Ezra uses his voice and position to read and interpret the law with those gathered.

Psalms 19: At the beginning of this psalm, we find praises to God celebrating God's creation, the heavens "using their voice" to declare the glory of God. The second part focuses on God's law, emphasizing its perfection, wisdom, and righteousness.

1 Corinthians 12: This is a well-known passage about the importance of unity and diversity within the Christian community.

Luke 4:14–21: Lastly, the gospel reading from Luke 4 tells of Jesus reading from the scroll of Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because God has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
God has sent me to proclaim release
to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

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WATCH BISHOP MARIANN EDGAR BUDDÉ'S SERMON

Leader Note: If time allows, we recommend watching the Bishop's entire sermon. For a more concise option, simply watch the final three minutes. If you can't show a video, transcripts are here—illstrtdm.in/bishop-budde-transcript

In this video, you will hear the end of Bishop Budde's sermon at the Service of Prayer for the Nation held on January 21. She addressed the president specifically in one final plea, asking him to have mercy on the people in our country who are now scared. She specifically named that those who are scared include queer people, trans kids, and immigrants. At a time when the world is very divided, Bishop Budde used her voice and position to speak calmly and confidently. Listen to her words:



Watch entire sermon: illstrtdm.in/bishop-budde-sermon

Bishop Budde's "Final Plea" begins at 12:22.

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

Leader Note: Allow the youth time to reflect on their own, especially if this is their first time hearing or watching the video

When it feels natural, transition to these questions:

- What does Bishop Budde talk about in her "final plea" to the president?
- What does it mean to make a plea?
- What traits did Bishop Budde model while she spoke to the president?
- If you were going to tell a friend about this video, how would you describe Bishop Budde's message?
- Bishop Budde asks the president to have mercy. How do you define mercy?

Bishop Budde says, "God teaches us to be merciful to the stranger, for we were all once strangers in this land."

She shares this boldly and bravely, knowing the president's words and actions. She also chose to speak these words knowing she would most likely face backlash, which she has.

But she decided to speak anyway, on behalf of those who are scared and vulnerable.

- When have you spoken up for someone who is being mistreated?
- When have you spoken out for something you care about?

In her sermon, Bishop Budde focuses on the topic of unity. She shares that in order for there to be true unity among us, it must have a strong foundation. She explains that the three foundations for unity are honoring the inherent dignity of every human being, honesty, and humility.

- How would you define unity?
- What might honoring the inherent dignity of every human being look like at home? At school? At church? In our communities? How can this help create unity?
- How can honesty help create unity?
- How can humility help create unity?
- What else is important as we seek unity?
- Where do you see unity?

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PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE (OPTIONAL)

Leader Note: Again, depending on your context, you could include the president's response to the sermon and the discussion questions below.

If you watched the video of the sermon, describe the body language and facial expressions of the president, vice president, and those around them.

After the service, a reporter asked the president his thoughts. The president responded, "I don't think it was a good service. They could have done better." Later that night, he posted this on social media:



Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

The so-called Bishop who spoke at the National Prayer Service on Tuesday morning was a Radical Left hard line Trump hater. She brought her church into the World of politics in a very ungracious way. She was nasty in tone, and not compelling or smart. She failed to mention the large number of illegal migrants that came into our Country and killed people. Many were deposited from jails and mental institutions. It is a giant crime wave that is taking place in the USA. Apart from her inappropriate statements, the service was a very boring and uninspiring one. She is not very good at her job! She and her church owe the public an apology! t

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Jan 21, 2025, 11:39 PM

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- How does this response make you feel?
- How would you respond to the president?

WAYS TO RESPOND

Modeling the bravery and boldness of Bishop Budde, we are reminded that we, too, are called to act and speak up in the face of cruelty and hate.

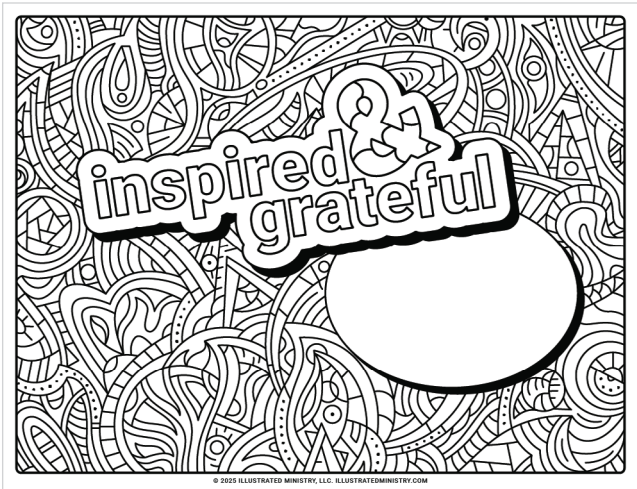
- How are you inspired by her words?
- How is God calling us to act with boldness and courage?
- How is God calling us to respond with mercy and kindness?

Leader Note: Again, taking the pulse of your group, determine whether they might feel ready to respond in one or multiple ways below.

Flood the mailbox of the Bishop with love:

Color the included coloring page and write notes of gratitude that you can send to Bishop Budde, or write your own letters of encouragement as she faces hate and backlash for speaking truth to power. You can use this address to send these to Bishop Budde.

Episcopal Church House—Diocese of Washington
c/o The Rt. Rev. Mariann Budde
3101 Wisconsin Ave NW
Washington, DC 20016



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Advocate for those closest to you: How safe is your church for people who are marginalized and vulnerable during this time? Write letters to your council, session, vestry, etc., sharing your concerns about the president's actions and your ideas on making your church a safe space for all people.

Use your voice: Write to your local representatives to ensure protections are in place in your community for those who are vulnerable. Check out this link for more information on how to do this: illstrtdm.in/write-representatives

Buy her book: Did you know Bishop Budde wrote a book on bravery? Consider purchasing it from a local bookstore: illstrtdm.in/bishop-budde-book

WRAP UP

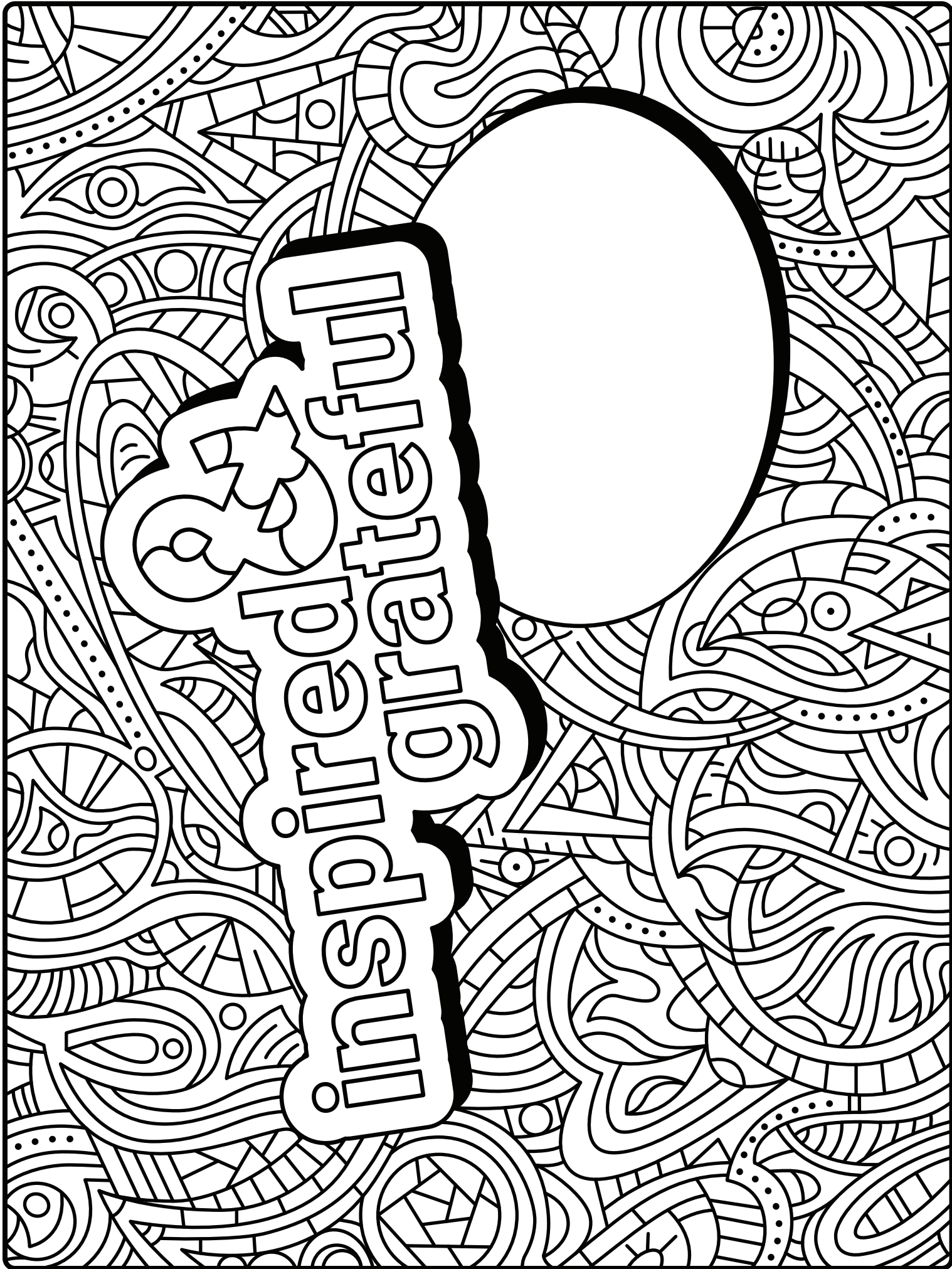
As we reflect on scripture, following the example of the prophets of old and Jesus in Luke's gospel, we seek to understand how God has called us to live. Let us pursue the greatest commandments that we have been given: to love God and to love our neighbor. Let us continue the work spoken by the prophet Isaiah and reaffirmed by Jesus: to bring good news to the poor, to release those who are in captivity, and to set free those who are oppressed.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, we join in prayer with Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde, and ask that you would "grant us the strength and courage to honor the dignity of every human being, to speak the truth to one another in love, and walk humbly with each other and our God for the good of all people in this nation and the world." Amen.

This youth group lesson was written by guest writer **DEBORAH JODREY**, Director of Faith Formation at Upper Dublin Lutheran Church (Ambler, PA).





inspired & grateful