To: NDNU Students
From: Judith Maxwell Greig, President
       John Lemmon, Interim Provost
       Greg White, Associate Provost
       Marsh Allen Smith, Dean of Students
       Lakiba Pittman, Director, Office of Diversity
       Diana Enriquez-Field, Director, Office of Spirituality
       Jim McGarry, Director, Sister Dorothy Stang Center
Date: November 14, 2016
Re: Post-Election Reflections
Cc: NDNU Faculty and Staff

The election last week and its aftermath have been stunning. So many of us have struggled to make sense of much of the inflammatory language and actions we have witnessed.

*The Hallmarks of a Notre Dame de Namur Learning Community* give us clear grounding principles as we consider our role as students and educators in how to work together to help heal our nation and move forward. “We proclaim by our lives... that God is good; we honor the dignity and sacredness of each person; we educate for and act on behalf of justice and peace in the world; we embrace the gift of diversity.” These words inspire us in a time and place that feels itself torn apart and deeply divided.

One of the important roles that a university plays in a democracy is to be a place where diverse people from a wide range of backgrounds come together and engage in vigorous dialogue about the important issues of our time. At NDNU we are blessed to have a very diverse student body, across so many dimensions of diversity. We welcome and honor the voice and experience that each person brings. While we do not always agree or even sometimes respond as our best selves, we fundamentally believe in the value of each person.

It is clear that many people on both sides of the election do not feel valued or supported in our society. Some are angry, some are in despair. Many feel left behind by a deepening economic divide. Many now wonder if they can safely live. Even though we do not take a political position as a university, we want to create a space for caring and respectful listening to the issues that trouble each person and promote careful thought to solving the underlying issues in creative ways that do not demean others. Let us work to show at NDNU that we understand each other intellectually and emotionally and put both our brains and our hearts to work on solutions.

Accepting each person as a human being, however, does not mean that we must accept the wrong words and behaviors that others demonstrate. Our country is founded on rule of law and
transition of power without violence. We have laws against violent actions, against sexual assault, against hate speech, and the like. And wrong words should be countered, with powerful argument which honors the person but shows the fallacies of thought or offers a better way. Martin Luther King offers many words that offer a better way. Here is a brief excerpt from his speech “Where Do We Go From Here?”:

I have. . .decided to stick with love, for I know that love is ultimately the only answer to mankind’s problems. . . . And I’m not talking about emotional bosh when I talk about love; I’m talking about a strong, demanding love. . . . And I must confess, my friends, that the road ahead will not always be smooth. There will still be rocky places of frustration and meandering points of bewilderment. . . . And there will be those moments when the buoyancy of hope will be transformed into the fatigue of despair. . . . But difficult and painful as it is, we must walk on in the days ahead with an audacious faith in the future.

Please join us in committing to, praying for, and working for making NDNU a place where all members of our community can feel safe and work for the social justice that honors the dignity of all people.

Resources:

If you would like an opportunity to talk about your thoughts and feelings, there will be a meeting in the Campus Programs Office on Wednesday, November 16 from 5:30-7:00 p.m.

If you are unavailable to attend the program and want to talk to someone, please know Counseling Services is available. Please contact 650-508-3714 to set up an appointment.

Diana Enriquez-Field, the Director of the Office of Spirituality, is here to provide guidance to the NDNU community; please contact her at denriquezfield@ndnu.edu.

The Sister Dorothy Stang Center for Social Justice and Community Engagement would like to invite the community to get involved. For example, the SDSC could organize student and staff participation in the monthly interfaith vigil at the ICE Detention Center in Richmond, the jail for alleged immigration offenders for the whole Bay Area. Our Bonner Leaders were just there on the 5th of November; the next service is December 3, and they re-occur every first Saturday. Please contact Jim McGarry for more information on this and other opportunities at jmcgarry@ndnu.edu.