



The Epistle

July, 2015

Father Bob's message:

As I write this article, it is the 4th of July weekend. Over the last couple of weeks, like you, I have witnessed events that have been deeply disturbing while others with have left me with a profound sense of hopefulness.

In some ways, I was not really surprised by the tragic, despicable act committed against the nine of Emanuel AME Church in Charleston. I say that I was not surprised for I have been deeply troubled by the growing bitterness and divisiveness in our nation. We have witnessed those who are all too willing to shout down and ridicule those who disagree with them rather than listen to each other and talk with respect for one another. Name calling has become the central mark of our national political scene whether a liberal, progressive, conservative, fundamentalist whatever. As I have mentioned before, we have become a people who more and more define ourselves not by what we are for but what we are against. I find myself wondering what we as a people do believe in. We have become a nation not where we are called to a common cause,

a common good but one of isolated individualism. We talk fervently about rights yet we make no mention of responsibilities. There can be no rights without responsibilities. We are nation where our first inclination is not to talk and reason together but to strike out, to use words as weapons and if they do not do what we want them to do, well we call the heavy guns, literally. This hateful act in Charleston should open our eyes to the fact that we have not arrived, that we do not have it all together and that we still have a great deal to do to reach the ideal that our founding parents laid down in the birth certificates of our nation. The question is when will we as Christians and Americans wake up to the fact that we cannot be faithful to either while there is injustice, inequality, bigotry, hatred and violence in our land. As Americans, as Christians, you and I must say no to a world where nine of our fellow Christians and citizens can be senselessly and dastardly murdered, murdered as they peacefully gathered in the house of God, gathered to study the bible just as many of us have done and will do again here at St Stephen's. This is not America that we celebrate on the 4th of July.

Now I said that I had a sense of hopefulness. I found that hopefulness in the way that the majority of my fellow citizens of this my adopted state have responded to this hateful crime. I pray that we will continue to respond with the same love and compassion and repulsion of this crime as they have shown so far. I pray that they will remain determined to move towards even deeper understanding and equality among all of us. I do fear, however, that the substantive issues raised by this incident, the real work that we must do as a people, will be lost, and sidetracked by

the distraction of the debate over whether or not to remove the battle flag of the Confederate Army from the statehouse grounds. If this flag debate takes precedence over the critical discussions that we must have, then the murder of those nine in Charleston will have meant nothing and we will have lost a precious opportunity to move forward and provide an example for other states to follow. If we do not then our state will be stained with shame. Let us pray that the voices of those committed to dialogue, healing and reconciliation may drown out those that wish to breed division, discord and hate for a cause that was valiantly fought for but was lost.

Shifting focus, during this last week of June, there has been significant action within the Episcopal Church. General Convention meeting in Salt Lake City voted to authorize same-sex marriages in our churches. This should not come as a surprise to anyone, certainly in the light of the direction that the Supreme Court's decisions have been going over the past couple of years concerning same-sex marriages. What I hope that this decision will do is open up a serious dialogue within our churches. I feel that in the past, there has been a sense on the part of many that it would not happen. Well it has happened, let us come together and reason and talk about how we can support one another.

The Church in embracing this change has allowed for significant room for those who feel that they cannot support this action while still remaining within the Church. The same has been said for the clergy who feel that they cannot perform such a marriage. From what I had read so far, all that the National Church seeks is that those who cannot support the blessing of such a marriage

work with those who can to provide for those couples of our churches who wish the Church's blessing of their marriage. Is there still more work, more discussion to take place? Yes, there needs to be, but clear headed, rational discussion. There has been enough of the outrageous talk, the prophetic pronouncements of doom and the destruction of the institution of marriage on both sides and still probably will be for a time, but we as a Church must get beyond this for I feel that there are other issues of just as great if not of greater importance and calling upon us which we as a Church are called by our Christian faith to address in the world and the nation.

The other action by the General Convention that for me personally was far more significant for our Church was the selection of Bishop Michael Curry, Bishop of the Diocese of North Carolina, to be the next Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. He will become the first African-American priest and bishop to be elected to that position. To me, this is something that has been long overdue in our Church. From what I have read of him and reading some of his writings, his priority is evangelism, a calling of people to Christ, for the ministry of the church in impacting upon our world must begin with our relationship with Christ and must be empowered by Christ's teachings if it is to make a difference.

There has been a lot happening so far this summer and summer has only just begun. We live in interesting times. I opened by saying that I have been deeply disturbed yet have also experienced profound hopefulness. I believe that God is indeed at work in our days. I just pray that I might have the discernment to see the work that He is doing and be a small part of that work.

I hope that you will have a good 4th of July, be blessed with time with family and friends, an opportunity to rest in the sun with a good book and know that God is with you, within you and around you.
Fr. Bob

Senior Warden Update

The Father’s Day celebration was a huge success. A big thank you to Beverly, Brenda, Patti Palmer, and everyone else who assisted with the grand occasion. The women of the church always do things in style. Carter was busy taking pictures and believe it or not, there is a picture of him. He needs a selfie stick because he is always absent due to the being the only one taking the photos. We missed everyone who couldn’t be there.

DID YOU SIGN UP FOR HOSPITALITY SOON?



JULY

7/5	OPEN
7/12	OPEN
7/19	Donna Guess
7/26	OPEN

AUGUST

8/2	Berk/Koenig
8/9	OPEN
8/16	OPEN
8/23	OPEN
8/30	OPEN

Please wish the following people, a Happy Birthday



JULY

7/9	Mack Upchurch
7/14	Bonnie Bryant
7/17	Bitsy Milling
7/24	Kellie McGrew
7/24	Haley Autry
7/30	Laura Langdale
7/31	Phyllis DeLoach
7/31	Mike McMaster

AUGUST

8/1	Anna Federico
8/3	Tommy Copley
8/3	Amanda Ford
8/5	Christine Langdale
8/6	Elsie Moore
8/6	Karen Siegling
8/11	Patti Palmer
8/14	Christopher Floyd
8/15	Beth Branham
8/17	Mason Ryder Owens
8/18	Allison Milling
8/21	Madighan McMaster
8/22	Mike Floyd
8/23	JoAnn Palmer
8/30	Lindsay Matthews

Take a peek at the fun we’ve been having





