

# Statement on the Violence in Washington



Beloved in Christ,

I, along with many of you, watched in horror yesterday as our beloved institution of democracy – the Capitol Building – was attacked by terrorists. Our democracy rests on the ideal that we peacefully accept the results of elections. When we do not agree, we must use existing laws to challenge those results, and not resort to violence. In our democratic society, we always have the opportunity and indeed the **DUTY** to peacefully persist until the next election.

Our baptismal covenant, which is our lived expression of Christian ideals, asks us "to seek and serve Christ in all persons," loving our neighbors as ourselves, and to "strive for justice and peace among all people" with God's help (BCP, p. 305). In this era, where too often, people refuse to hear one another, we can – and we **must** – do better. Our current pandemic fosters "othering" because of our physical and virtual isolation. We must learn to appreciate difference. Our differences are a part of our unity. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:14-26:

*[T]he body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.*

God has created each one of us to play an integral role in the unfolding story of humans in Creation. When we open our ears and our eyes, we can speak together and allow the Holy Spirit to work through us to become one unified body. But when we close our senses to what we cannot believe, we limit the strength of our body and damage it. It can be repaired, but this can take weeks, months, or years.

The Book of Common Prayer (p. 154) provides a supplication for use as a devotion "especially in times of war, or of national anxiety, or of disaster" and it contains these verses and responses, which I find helpful in working to open my heart to prayer:

- V. *From our enemies defend us, O Christ;*  
R. *Graciously behold our afflictions.*
- V. *With pity behold the sorrows of our hearts;*  
R. *Mercifully forgive the sins of thy people.*
- V. *Favorably with mercy hear our prayers;*  
R. *O Son of David, have mercy upon us.*
- V. *Both now and ever vouchsafe to hear us, O Christ;*  
R. *Graciously hear us, O Christ; graciously hear us, O Lord Christ.*

And on page 815, we are given a prayer for the human family:

*O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your son. Look now with compassion on the entire human family; and particularly this part of the family, in the United States, and those in our nation's capital; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

At this somber time, we pray for our nation. We ask God to heal us from our divisions, and to show us the way to be once again "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Real unity does not exist in uniformity and homogenization, but only in bringing many different gifts and abilities into harmony, like the body to which Paul refers. Our legitimate differences are rooted inside of the same God.

Our differences, conceived as an expression of a deeper unity which we cannot yet understand, open us up more fully to the deep mystery of an all-loving God; and yet, at the same time, these differences prevent us from making idols of our own religious traditions, ideas, ways of understanding faith, theologies, ideologies, and political stances. Accepting these differences as an intent of God the Creator should prevent us from constructing our identity on the basis of opposition to others and the need to forever shut out "the other."

God loves us all. God has enough love to go around. Difference – as part of the mystery of the unity of the human creation – helps to keep us humble and allows us to create that strong, unified body which Paul references.

May our ever-loving God grant you peace, give you the strength to live another day, instill in you the faith to accept others, inspire you with gladness, and show forth the love for all creation in your life.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jason" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pastor Jason