



Faith Lift –Love Offering

Last Sunday night I was asked to do something I don't get to do every Sunday. I was asked to pray for the offering.

I guess since some of the offering on Sunday mornings goes to pay my light bills it is somehow inappropriate for me to pray for our Sunday morning offering, but I was delighted to get to pray for the LOVE Offering at the concert at St. Paul Presbyterian Church last Sunday night. The concert was called "Get Together-a Concert for All People to Stand Against Violence." Among those who will be recipients of the Love Offering will be the families of the victims of the Orlando Shootings and the Dallas Police Officers.

The Rev. Dr. Kevin Boyd, the pastor of St. Paul church, said, "It is our belief that no one should be the victim of violence on the basis of race, gender expression, or religious belief. We do not have to agree on the details of any of these matters to know that violence is not a Christian response. We are not just standing against violence. We are standing for love."

The concert opened with an Organ, Piano, Keyboard Trio comprised of James Marshall Maxwell, Brian Dean Granquist and Don Frank Hermanson. Among those singing at the concert were Calabash, an African Choir composed of members of St. Paul church who are from Cameroon, Krystal Maguy from Senegal, the Praise Band from St. Paul called "Exit Bellaire", and the Rev. John Hirling, the Rev. Steve Thorney, the Rev. John Burnham, and yours truly and a couple of my friends. We were from St. Paul, St. John's, Faith Baytown, Grace Houston, and First Sugarland. The Rev Steve Thorney is a retired PCUSA pastor, who, incidentally will be preaching for us on October 16. The Rev. John Hirling is serving as an Interim Pastor at Lord of Life Lutheran in the Woodlands.

Houston City Councilman Mike Laster spoke beautifully about the need to work to quell violence in our world. He was amazed at the outpouring of love and joy at the concert. He confessed to being an Episcopalian. He said to Rev. Boyd, "This is definitely not your father's Presbyterian gathering." Rev. Boyd said, "O yes it is. My Dad's in the back row."

When it came time for the offering Rev. Boyd asked me if I would "pray for the offering." He asked me to pray for it before we took it. I said, I'd rather pray for it after-like we do at Faith on Sunday mornings. Then I understood why he asked me to pray for it before.

When he called for the offering the members of his church who are from Cameroon started beating on a cowbell and drums and started dancing forward down the aisle singing and bringing their offering forward to place in two handmade bowls from their sister church in Cameroon. The rest of the crowd followed their example. It was the most joyful offering I have ever taken. When they finished THEN I prayed. From among the crowd of about 60 people we offered over \$1,000 to be distributed to Victims of Violence.

The closing anthem was "Get Together" a song from 1967 by the Youngbloods the chorus of which pleads, "Come on people now. Smile on your brother. Everybody get together and try to love one another right now." It also ended with a call to "Come Together Again" at one of the other seven Presbyterian churches represented that night. St. John's Presbyterian volunteered for October. I know I want to go again. Who knows? I might get to a second chance to pray for a ... love offering.