

Dear friends,

In my [sermon](#) Sunday, I referred to the sermon given by Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde at the National Prayer Service on January 21, 2025 at the Washington National Cathedral.

In this sermon, Bishop Budde calls for unity in our nation through the foundations of dignity, honesty, and humility. What has garnered the attention of the nation (positively and negatively), however, is the way she ended the sermon by facing the President and asking him to have mercy on the fearful and oppressed in our nation. She realized that she was in a position to speak truth to power, so with grace, humility, and faithfulness, she did just that.

There are times in our lives when we find ourselves at a crossroads, faced with a chance to speak or remain silent, to act or remain passive, to take risks or play it safe. This past weekend, I attended a panel discussion at the public library that looked at the events of 1986 surrounding Durham's first anti-discrimination proclamation to include LGBTQ rights, the organized backlash to recall the mayor (Wib Gulley, FPC member) in response, and the coalition power-building that was successful in supporting him. The panel included FPC's pastor emeritus, Joe Harvard, and five others who played significant leadership roles in supporting Gulley. Joe shared his realization that he and other clergy who supported the rights of LGBTQ individuals needed to raise their voices in support of Mayor Gulley's anti-discrimination proclamation in order to offer a counterbalance to those clergy who were vocally opposing it.

Joe gathered his colleagues in community churches and synagogues, including (and critically) those from the Black community. Rabbi Friedman, Bishop Elroy Lewis, and Rev. Haywood Holderness were among the first he called. These clergy joined other community supporters of the mayor's proclamation and put an ad in the paper that included this quote from Joe:

"There has been a lot said that makes it appear that the religious community speaks with one voice on this matter. That just isn't the case. We stand for just treatment of homosexual persons in regard to their civil liberties, equal rights and protection under the law. We encourage all people of faith and good will to join with us in eliminating discrimination, bigotry and fear in our community."

Needless to say, the effort to recall Mayor Gulley failed.

Friends, in my sermon Sunday, I reminded us all that we do not always know when and how we will be called to step into courageous spaces to say, write, or do courageous things for the gospel of Jesus Christ. We do not always know, but through prayer, study, worship, and community support, we prepare ourselves to be ready when our time comes.

When will your time come? I pray you will know and be ready when it does, as Bishop Budde did, and that you will live love, speak truth, and work for peace and justice in our community, in our nation, and in our world every day, in whatever ways you can. We are in this together. May God be with us all.

With love,

Mindy