

03/04/26

My beloved Central United Methodist Church community,

This week, candidates from across Georgia gathered at the State Capitol to qualify for elected office. Standing in the rotunda just before 9 a.m., I watched two lines form. One to my right and one to my left. Each line represents candidates of different political parties. I'm not sure where independent or non-partisan candidates were asked to stand, but I could clearly see the contrast between the two lines. One reflected the rich diversity of God's people; the other reflected a sea of relative sameness drowning in privilege. In both lines, I recognized faces—people I've seen on television, people I went to college with, and people who have worshiped at Central United Methodist Church.

Among them was Congresswoman Nikema Williams, surrounded by her family and supporters. After qualifying for reelection, she asked Rev. Dr. Vance Ross and me to pray with her. And there, in the center of the rotunda—literally between the two-party lines—I was reminded of the painting that hangs in my office of God's children walking on dry ground, the waters walled up on the right and on the left. That image spoke again: Our allegiance is not to a party, left or right. Our allegiance is to the will of God.

At Central United Methodist Church, we do not endorse political candidates. But we do embrace the call of the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, which instructs pastors and congregations to engage the political realities of our world using the yardstick of the gospel of Jesus Christ.



The Discipline speaks with clarity about matters of war and peace:

“We reject the use of war as an instrument of foreign policy and insist that every peaceful and diplomatic means of resolution be exhausted before the start of armed conflicts. Similarly, we oppose the increasing reliance on preemptive strikes unless they can be clearly demonstrated to be proportionate in response, delimited in human casualties, and undertaken in response to clear and immediate threats to

human lives. We grieve that in a world where so many live in poverty, governments continue to dedicate enormous resources to preparing for and conducting wars. We are especially distressed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons and call not only for an end to their production, but for their complete elimination.” ¶163.F

When any nation initiates military action without proper authorization or without exhausting every path toward peace, people of faith are compelled to speak. And when such action results in the deaths of children—like the 164 schoolgirls and 14 teachers recently killed in Iran—our silence becomes complicity. Some may call such actions “counter-terrorism,” but there is no terror greater than parents preparing to bury their children because of a strike carried out in the name of peace. Lord, have mercy! Christ, have mercy!

War needs to be a last resort and is best reserved for united coalitions who have exhausted all diplomatic options that preserve life and dignity. Our nation has instead allowed bloodthirsty warmongers to thrust us into conflict after conflict without even having a discussion on the floor of the congress or making a clear case before the citizens who may pay the ultimate prize for the action.

The prophet Isaiah once cast a vision of a different world: a world where swords become plowshares, spears become pruning hooks, and nations refuse to study war anymore. That vision is the future God longs for.

So, as I embark on a pilgrimage to Birmingham, Montgomery, and Selma to trace the steps of heroes and heroines on the Evelyn Gibson Lowery Civil Rights Heritage Tour this weekend with 25 others connected with Central UMC, I am praying AND I am acting. I am raising my voice, and I am urging you to raise yours, by contacting your elected leaders, by bearing witness to the gospel’s call for peace, and by participating faithfully in the democratic process. Praying without supporting action is equivalent to faith without works.

May we walk the dry ground God sets before us—neither pulled to the right nor to the left, but guided by the Spirit toward grace, mercy, justice, righteousness, and love.

May Goodness and Mercy Pursue You,



Rev. Dr. Brian A. Tillman
Senior Pastor