



The Epistle

June 2018

The Episcopal Church of St. James on the Parkway

A community growing in Christ, called to worship, learn, and serve.

Spirit-filled Prophecy of Christian ethic

The Rev. William Heisley

Two of the several definitions of prophet are these: A prophet is one who is gifted with more than ordinary spiritual and moral insight; A prophet is an effective or leading spokesman for a cause, doctrine, or group.

We tend to think that prophecy ended as the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) took its final shape. Those in the Church with a slightly more liberal conception of the term might also include the people in the New Testament who spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

But prophecy has never stopped. It continues through all ages, all place,

all cultures. We often look to theologians or philosophers or bishops or monks for gentle, strong words that give us a clear sense of the Christian ethic that is being called from our midst. How should we live and act in this time, in that situation?

A meeting of such persons was held on Ash Wednesday, 14 February 2018. The assembled group, not speaking officially for any organization, but thinking, speaking and writing prophetically from the Holy Spirit in their midst produced a document which has recently been distributed in the Episcopal Church. Its title is *Reclaiming Jesus: A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis*.

I printed and distributed copies of the statement and its list of signatories on Sunday 13 May 2018. It is attached to this edition of *The Epistle* so that you might read or reread it. In addition, I urge you to pass it on. Email it to friends, family, to all who are concerned for the current state of our society and cultures. It is a strong, Spirit-filled piece of prophecy, the likes of which the Church needs in abundance, and is compelled to give to the world as a gift of peace and truth-telling.

In the love of Jesus for all people, act in love and work for the victory of truth over deceit and greed in all things.

Reclaiming Jesus: A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis

We are living through perilous and polarizing times as a nation, with a dangerous crisis of moral and political leadership at the highest levels of our government and in our churches. **We believe the soul of the nation and the integrity of faith are now at stake.**

It is time to be followers of Jesus before anything else—nationality, political party, race, ethnicity, gender, geography—our identity in Christ precedes every other identity. We pray that our nation will see Jesus' words in us. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

When politics undermines our theology, we must examine that politics. The church's role is to change the world through the life and love of Jesus Christ. The government's role is to serve the common good by protecting justice and peace, rewarding good behavior while restraining bad behavior (Romans 13). When that role is undermined by political leadership, faith leaders must stand up and speak out. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state."

It is often the duty of Christian leaders, especially elders, to speak the truth in love to our churches and to name and warn against temptations, racial and cultural captivities, false doctrines, and political idolatries—and even our complicity in them. We do so here with humility, prayer, and a deep dependency on the grace and Holy Spirit of God.

This letter comes from a retreat on Ash Wednesday, 2018. In this season of Lent, we feel deep lamentations for the state of our nation, and our own hearts are filled with confession for the sins we

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feel called to address. The true meaning of the word repentance is to turn around. It is time to lament, confess, repent, and turn. In times of crisis, the church has historically learned to return to Jesus Christ.

Jesus is Lord. That is our foundational confession. It was central for the early church and needs to again become central to us. If Jesus is Lord, then Caesar was not—nor any other political ruler since. If Jesus is Lord, no other authority is absolute. Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of God he announced, is the Christian’s first loyalty, above all others. We pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). Our faith is personal but never private, meant not only for heaven but for this earth.

The question we face is this: Who is Jesus Christ for us today? What does our loyalty to Christ, as disciples, require at this moment in our history? We believe it is time to renew our theology of public discipleship and witness. Applying what “Jesus is Lord” means today is the message we commend as elders to our churches.

What we believe leads us to what we must reject. Our “Yes” is the foundation for our “No.” What we confess as our faith leads to what we confront. Therefore, we offer the following six affirmations of what we believe, and the resulting rejections of practices and policies by political leaders which dangerously corrode the soul of the nation and deeply threaten the public integrity of our faith. We pray that we, as followers of Jesus, will find the depth of faith to match the danger of our political crisis.

I. WE BELIEVE each human being is made in God’s image and likeness

(Genesis 1:26). That image and likeness confers a divinely decreed dignity, worth, and God-given equality to all of us as children of the one God who is the Creator of all things. Racial bigotry is a brutal denial of the image of God (the *imago dei*) in some of the children of God. Our participation in the global community of Christ absolutely prevents any toleration of racial bigotry. Racial justice and healing are biblical and theological issues for us, and are central to the mission of the body of Christ in the world. We give thanks for the prophetic role of the historic black churches in America when they have called for a more faithful gospel.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the resurgence of white nationalism and racism in our nation on many fronts, including the highest levels of political leadership. We, as followers of Jesus, must clearly reject the use of racial bigotry for political gain that we have seen. In the face of such bigotry, silence is complicity. In particular, we reject white supremacy and commit ourselves to help dismantle the systems and structures that perpetuate white preference and advantage. Further, any doctrines or political strategies that use racist resentments, fears, or language must be named as public sin—one that goes back to the foundation of our nation and lingers on. Racial bigotry must be antithetical for those belonging to the body of Christ, because it denies the truth of the gospel we profess.

II. WE BELIEVE we are one body. In Christ, there is to be no oppression based on race, gender, identity, or class (Galatians 3:28). The body of Christ, where those great human divisions are to be overcome, is meant to be an example for the rest of society. When we fail to overcome these oppressive obstacles, and even perpetuate them, we have failed in our vocation to the world—to proclaim and live the reconciling gospel of Christ.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT misogyny, the mistreatment, violent abuse,

sexual harassment, and assault of women that has been further revealed in our culture and politics, including our churches, and the oppression of any other child of God. We lament when such practices seem publicly ignored, and thus privately condoned, by those in high positions of leadership. We stand for the respect, protection, and affirmation of women in our families, communities, workplaces, politics, and churches. We support the courageous truth-telling voices of women, who have helped the nation recognize these abuses. We confess sexism as a sin, requiring our repentance and resistance.

III. WE BELIEVE how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner is how we treat Christ himself. (Matthew 25: 31-46) “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” God calls us to protect and seek justice for those who are poor and vulnerable, and our treatment of people who are “oppressed,” “strangers,” “outsiders,” or otherwise considered “marginal” is a test of our relationship to God, who made us all equal in divine dignity and love. Our proclamation of the lordship of Jesus Christ is at stake in our solidarity with the most vulnerable. If our gospel is not “good news to the poor,” it is not the gospel of Jesus Christ (Luke 4:18).

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the language and policies of political leaders who would debase and abandon the most vulnerable children of God. We strongly deplore the growing attacks on immigrants and refugees, who are being made into cultural and political targets, and we need to remind our churches that God makes the treatment of the “strangers” among us a test of faith (Leviticus 19:33-34). We won’t accept the neglect of the well-being of low-income families and children, and we will resist repeated attempts to deny health care to those who most need it. We confess our growing national sin

of putting the rich over the poor. We reject the immoral logic of cutting services and programs for the poor while cutting taxes for the rich. Budgets are moral documents. We commit ourselves to opposing and reversing those policies and finding solutions that reflect the wisdom of people from different political parties and philosophies to seek the common good. Protecting the poor is a central commitment of Christian discipleship, to which 2,000 verses in the Bible attest.

IV. WE BELIEVE that truth is morally central to our personal and public lives. Truth-telling is central to the prophetic biblical tradition, whose vocation includes speaking the Word of God into their societies and speaking the truth to power. A commitment to speaking truth, the ninth commandment of the Decalogue, “You shall not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:16), is foundational to shared trust in society. Falsehood can enslave us, but Jesus promises, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32). The search and respect for truth is crucial to anyone who follows Christ.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT the practice and pattern of lying that is invading our political and civil life. Politicians, like the rest of us, are human, fallible, sinful, and mortal. But when public lying becomes so persistent that it deliberately tries to change facts for ideological, political, or personal gain, the public accountability to truth is undermined. The regular purveying of falsehoods and consistent lying by the nation’s highest leaders can change the moral expectations within a culture, the accountability for a civil society, and even the behavior of families and children. The normalization of lying presents a profound moral danger to the fabric of society. In the face of lies that bring darkness, Jesus is our truth and our light.

V. WE BELIEVE that Christ’s way of leadership is servanthood, not

domination. Jesus said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles (the world) lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant” (Matthew 20:25-26). We believe our elected officials are called to public service, not public tyranny, so we must protect the limits, checks, and balances of democracy and encourage humility and civility on the part of elected officials. We support democracy, not because we believe in human perfection, but because we do not. The authority of government is instituted by God to order an unredeemed society for the sake of justice and peace, but ultimate authority belongs only to God.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT any moves toward autocratic political leadership and authoritarian rule. We believe authoritarian political leadership is a theological danger that threatens democracy and the common good—and we will resist it. Disrespect for the rule of law, not recognizing the equal importance of our three branches of government, and replacing civility with dehumanizing hostility toward opponents are of great concern to us. Neglecting the ethic of public service and accountability, in favor of personal recognition and gain often characterized by offensive arrogance, are not just political issues for us. They raise deeper concerns about political idolatry, accompanied by false and unconstitutional notions of authority.

VI. WE BELIEVE Jesus when he tells us to go into all nations making disciples (Matthew 28:18). Our churches and our nations are part of an international community whose interests always surpass national boundaries. The most well-known verse in the New Testament starts with “For God so loved the world” (John 3:16). We, in turn, should love and serve the world and all its inhabitants, rather than seek first narrow, nationalistic prerogatives.

THEREFORE, WE REJECT

“America first” as a theological heresy for followers of Christ. While we share a patriotic love for our country, we reject xenophobic or ethnic nationalism that places one nation over others as a political goal. We reject domination rather than stewardship of the earth’s resources, toward genuine global development that brings human flourishing for all of God’s children. Serving our own communities is essential, but the global connections between us are undeniable. Global poverty, environmental damage, violent conflict, weapons of mass destruction, and deadly diseases in some places ultimately affect all places, and we need wise political leadership to deal with each of these.

WE ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED

for the soul of our nation, but also for our churches and the integrity of our faith. The present crisis calls us to go deeper—deeper into our relationship to God; deeper into our relationships with each other, especially across racial, ethnic, and national lines; deeper into our relationships with the most vulnerable, who are at greatest risk.

The church is always subject to temptations to power, to cultural conformity, and to racial, class, and gender divides, as Galatians 3:28 teaches us. But our answer is to be “in Christ,” and to “not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable, and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2)

The best response to our political, material, cultural, racial, or national idolatries is the First Commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Jesus summarizes the Greatest Commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, and your mind. This is the first commandment. And the second is like unto it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

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On these commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:38). As to loving our neighbors, we would add "no exceptions."

We commend this letter to pastors, local churches, and young people who are watching and waiting to see what the churches will say and do at such a time as this.

Our urgent need, in a time of moral and political crisis, is to recover the power of confessing our faith. Lament, repent, and then repair. If Jesus is Lord, there is always space for grace. We believe it is time to speak and to act in faith and conscience, not because of politics, but because we are disciples of Jesus Christ—to whom be all authority, honor, and glory. It is time for a fresh confession of faith. Jesus is Lord. He is the light in our darkness. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

- Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore, President and CEO, Global Alliance Interfaith Network
- Rev. Dr. Peter Borgdorff, Executive Director Emeritus, Christian Reformed Church in North America

- Dr. Amos Brown, Chair, Social Justice Commission, National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.
- Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Professor Emeritus, Columbia Theological Seminary
- Dr. Tony Campolo, Co-Founder, Red Letter Christians
- Dr. Iva Carruthers, General Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
- The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church
- Rev. Dr. James Forbes, President and Founder, Healing of the Nations Foundation and Preaching Professor at Union Theological Seminary
- Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary Emeritus, Reformed Church in America
- Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale, Senior Pastor, Ray of Hope Christian Church, Decatur, GA
- Rev. Dr. Richard Hamm, former General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Rev. Dr. Joel C. Hunter, Faith Community Organizer and Chairman, Community Resource Network
- Rev. Dr. Jo Anne Lyon, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church
- Bishop Vashti McKenzie, 117th Elected and Consecrated Bishop, AME Church
- Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Co-Convener National African American Clergy Network
- Dr. John Perkins, Chair Emeritus and Founding Member, Christian Community Development Association and President Emeritus, John & Vera Mae Perkins Foundation
- Senior Bishop Lawrence Reddick, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
- Fr. Richard Rohr, Founder, Center for Action and Contemplation
- Dr. Ron Sider, President Emeritus, Evangelicals for Social Action
- Rev. Jim Wallis, President and Founder, Sojourners
- Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, Director, NCC Truth and Racial Justice Initiative
- Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network; President, Skinner Leadership Institute
- Bishop Will Willimon, Bishop, The United Methodist Church, retired, Professor of the Practice of Ministry, Duke Divinity School

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From the Senior Warden Louis Hoffman

Taking St. James Into the Marketplace

Some of you know that “Earth and All Stars,” Hymn 412 in the Hymnal 1982, is my favorite hymn. This was the opening hymn on Sunday, May 6. The lyrics were written in 1926. Many bad things were happening then in the nation and the world. But the song celebrates the outward optimism and progress, at least of the ruling class, of the United States in the 1920s.

As it is with books, films, and other things that are familiar to us, when one re-reads a book, sees a film again, or sees anything familiar again, one often sees something new or something that strikes you differently. It’s like “White Christmas,” my favorite film (in defense of my taste for you film snobs, it was directed by Michael Curtiz, the Academy Award-winning director of “Casablanca”). Despite having seen “White Christmas” at least fifty times, I always notice something new.

So it is with “Earth and All Stars.” I generally focus on the colorful imagery. The loud-boiling test tubes, the limestone and beams. On the 6th, I thought about singing to the Lord a new song. What exactly does that mean?

I’ve talked a lot recently about taking the Cross to the marketplace. You may, by January, be sick of those words, if you aren’t already. But I think that singing to the Lord a new song is a similar concept. Both involve thinking and doing in ways that are different and new. They’re reaching out over the sea to Haiti. To the Nokomis East Neighborhood Association to grow the Giving Garden. To our neighboring churches to make our community service and social justice ministries go farther through Nokomis Serves. To Lake Nokomis Lutheran and Living Table UCC to talk about how we can work more closely together to build stronger communities inside and outside of our doors.

But why do we need to do this? What we have is okay, right? As our flyer says (in the brochure rack as you enter the Main Church entrance), we’re a scrappy little church. It’s good to be scrappy. But scrappiness will take us only so far. We’re able to be scrappy because we have a good tenant/partner in Mandala and because Irene Dahl generously gave us fifty percent of the royalties of two oil wells in Billings County, North Dakota. Take a look at the Treasurer’s Report posted on the Action Wall in the Narthex to see our financial dependence on Mandala and oil.

It wasn’t always this way. In the display case on the northeast wall of the Narthex, there’s a fragile, yellow newspaper article about the celebration of the tenth anniversary of St. James Parish. This would be in 1936, when St. James was in the old house at 39th Avenue South and East 49th Street, before even the Chapel was built in 1940. Here are a few excerpts from the article:

- There were 125 children registered in Sunday School in 1936.
- There were 20 youth in the youth group.
- There were 330 baptized persons and 150 members.
- In the Parish’s first ten years, there were 112 baptisms, 160 confirmations, 25 marriages, and 51 burials. That’s 11.2 baptisms, 16 confirmations, 2.5 marriages, and 5.1 burials per year.

I don’t know whether we’ll ever see numbers like this again. But by taking the Cross to the marketplace and by singing to the Lord new songs we can grow and thrive. What might this look like?

- Develop a ministry to welcome and incorporate new people into mem-

bership and the life of the congregation. Yes, we’re friendly. People do like us. But we need to be organized about it too. There are maybe a dozen people who are regular visitors who we’ve never formally welcomed as members.

- Work with Karen Spencer on funding, building, and operating a bread and pizza oven on our front lawn that would provide fresh bread to local food shelves and make St. James into a social center. Who doesn’t love pizza? Instead of being that “cute church on the Parkway,” we’d be “that cute church on the Parkway, and isn’t that the place with pizza? Let’s check it out!”
- The closer you get to the building, the more you see of the deferred maintenance that MacDonald and Mack Architects found in their Building Assessment. There are a lot of things that one person or small groups of people could do. There’s a lot of fading and peeling brown paint that, if freshened up, would make a world of difference. Running our floor buffer over the tile floors would also make a world of difference. Look how shiny they are under where the carpet used to be in the Gallery. Talk to Junior Warden Pat Morley about a job you can take on.
- Work with Anne Sween to improve our Sunday School and youth offerings and start lending money from our Kiva account. There are a lot of good ideas – the Pray Ground at St. Luke’s is but one. There’s some interest in a youth group. But we need more than one person to make these things work.

What new song will you sing to the Lord? How will you take St. James’ cross to the marketplace?



Abrahamic Tri-Faith Exploration

by Ruth Anne Olson

“The only way to tackle huge problems is ... to do something, even small steps. And to get with others who seek to do the same.” UC Berkeley’s Robert Reich offers this fundamental solution to the growing divisions and anxiety within our society.

It’s in this spirit that the people of Mosque At-Taqwa have invited St. James to join them for their Ramadan Iftar dinner on June 5. Since January, St. Jamesians have volunteered at At-Taqwa’s monthly food shelf. This is an opportunity to widen our growing friendship.

We’re Invited!

Imam Mohamed Elfallah and the people of At-Taqwa Mosque have invited the people of St. James to attend their Ramadan Iftar dinner.

Tuesday June 5, 8:00 p.m.

1608 Como Avenue in St. Paul

(Como & Snelling, across the street from the MN State Fair grounds)

This is part of a program hosted since 2010 by the Minnesota Council of Churches — an opportunity to meet, talk and learn.

Parking is easy; the dinner is free.

To register:

mnchurches.org

Click on “Register for Taking Heart Ramadan Iftar”

Click on “Register for a Taking Heart Iftar (2018)”

Fill out the form. And scroll — far down on the list — to pick the location of Masjid At-taqwa.

Dress code information: Please dress modestly. Both men and women should wear clothing that covers their shoulders, upper arms and knees. You will be asked to take off your shoes.

Women should bring a scarf to cover their hair.

Onè! Respe! (Honor! Respect!)

Excitements Past and Future!

by Ruth Anne Olson on behalf
of the St. James Haiti Committee

May 6 brought us an unexpected opportunity — to spend **TIME WITH
BONNE NOUVELLE'S PRIEST, PÈR
SONLEY JOSEPH.**

As part of their own Haiti partnership, St. John's Episcopal Church in Linden Hills was hosting his 3-day visit to Minnesota, and graciously offered some of his time to us. Minneapolis' famed **May Day Celebration** in Powderhorn Park was our first stop: enormous puppets, music, great people-watching, and hours of casual conversation. Next, was a **quick tour of St. James building and grounds.** There, Sonley was awed by our beautiful sanctuary and sobered by our suggestion to imagine our vast pews occupied by only 37 people — the # of people who'd been present at that morning's 10:30 service. He was pleased to recognize **Bonne Nouvelle students** whose photos hung in the narthex as part of our 3-week Haiti pledge drive. And, admiring the tiny plants beginning to emerge in the garden, he was stunned to learn that Minnesotans have only 4-5 months in which to grow food.

The day ended with a potluck supper and rich conversation with the Haiti Committee. Among the takeaways: **Bonne Nouvelle is one of the largest and strongest churches in the Diocese of Haiti.** Its leadership is highly respected; its place in village life is a model and challenge for others; as is its unique partnership with Sr. James.

Pèr Sonley talked of his commitment to seeing **reconstruction of**

Bonne Nouvelle's church building that was destroyed in the earthquake of 2010. More than 300 members continue to worship and celebrate in a hovel of tarps and tin. Members of our Haiti Committee invited Pèr Sonley to keep us informed of plans and opportunities to be supportive of this important effort.

JUNE 8 - 16 ARE DATES OF ST. JAMES NEXT VISIT TO BIGONET. Teens Leah Morley and Shakira Ryines will travel with Kurt Hall, Fr. William Heisley, and Louise Robinson. Joining them are Barbara Pierre-Louis and her daughters Myla and Aleila — good friends who have tutored St. Jamesians in Creole, serve as interpreters when our Haitian partners visit Minnesota, participated in youth pageants and much more. This will be St. James 9th visit to Bonne Nouvelle since 2008 — 30 individuals in-all who have, one time or more, enjoyed the hospitality of our Haitian partners.

Travelers will spend four days in Bigonet before traveling to long-time friend Roulio Lundy's home in Jacmel. Then to Port au Prince and finally to Croix des Bouquet to buy metal sculptures from artists whom we've come to know over the years.

Watch for news of their experiences in weeks to come.

Finally, while the deadline for this article comes too soon to report the results of **MAY'S 2018 HAITI PLEDGE DRIVE**, preliminary results look promising. We're optimistic that, once again we'll be able to help pay teacher salaries for Bonne Nouvelle's school of 300 + students, pre-K through 9th grades.

July Epistle

Send articles to Beth Harvey
(stjamesotp@comcast.net
and bhpens@mac.com)
by Monday, June 25.



Treasurer's Financial Report — January-April

By Tony Morley

This summary covers the first third of the year. Pledge payments were still less than expected but have caught up a lot. Other income was better than budget, and the bottom line for total income was well above budget. Property and office expenses were high, but total spending was almost exactly on budget. Keep your pledges up to date, and that red ink will shrink.

Meanwhile, our four non-budget, non-operating funds are all in healthy shape: Piotrowski memorials, \$2,100; Haiti, \$7,000; Tri-Faith, \$3,800; Building assessment, \$1,700.

	YTD Budget	YTD Actual	over/(under)
Pledged Income	\$59,016	\$56,660	\$(2,356)
Other Income	24,234	32,433	8,199
Total Income	83,250	89,093	5,843
Expenses	64,973	65,098	(125)
Net	18,277	23,955	5,718



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