(DRAFT VISION)

Twelve-weeks of ecumenical, interdenominational public worship (fall 2018) to confess and bear witness amidst this country’s political crises.

Conception

This nation is going through an unprecedented and truly devastating and frightening historical moment. This moment is marked deeply by increasing hostility and violence against communities of color, immigrant communities and religious minorities, and attended by evidence that authoritarian tendencies are emerging at the highest levels of government. A religious (“Christian”) and racial (“white”) nationalism is taking up more and more space in the public square; this too emboldened by rhetoric and actions at the highest levels of government.

As respected and prominent religious have stated publicly, “We believe that the soul of the nation and the integrity of the faith are at stake . . . we reject the resurgence of white nationalism and racism on many fronts, including the highest levels of political leadership” (http://reclaimingjesus.org).

In order to live rejection of such nationalism and demonstrate integrity, we must move in public. This is a moment, for the church to publicly confess and bear witness to and against this hostility and violence. In a posture of prayer, we are church will thus convene as a series of worship services. We will move outside of our buildings to hold our weekly, Sunday worship services, and hold such worship as services of confession for the harms being done in our name and bearing witness publicly to our desire to “cast our lot” with those most vulnerable ones being targeted right now.

People of all congregational communities are invited to be part of this movement. And yet, truthful confession requires this important clarity: the parts of the institutional church that are demographically a majority “white” are particularly responsible for public confession and dissent here. It is these congregations, and the white communities affiliated with them, that have played the largest role, in various ways, in allowing this religious and racial nationalism to gain strength. It is also these congregations that are least “at risk” in the current political moment. We are not targeted the way our brothers and sisters of color, from across borders and of other faith traditions have been.
We are church then is an ecumenical series of worship services that will take place in an inter-congregational (and inter-denominational) way. The worships sites for worship will be civic sites that are in actuality or symbolically perpetrating or colluding with the harms being done. (For example, building(s) enabling ICE, police departments, courts. Participating congregations will determine the right sites together.)

*This is not a protest. This is not partisan. There are no specific policy demands.* Many other organizations and groups (religious and not) are mobilizing both locally and nationally. We seek neither to draw energy or resources away from that work nor will we attempt to write a shared platform that the diversity of political perspectives that exist within our congregations would make impossible.

But we are clear. This crises in our political body cuts political parties. It is a crises pertaining to issues of human rights and basic matters of human flourishing about which we can agree to take a public stand even amidst our different perspective on the best public policies or political affiliations. The degradations being committed against refugees and migrants fleeing for their lives, against innocent black and brown people who are members of this civic body, the banning and vitriol being used in public against Muslim and Jews; these are not partisan matters.

We will gather, pray, confess, bear witness in public to the sacredness of human life that our religious traditions call us to honor and protect.

**Draft Vision (to be honed together at a series of mid- to late-August 2018 meetings)**

- To publicly engage in a posture of confession and witness bearing;
- To have our weekly prayers, sermons and rituals changed and shaken-up because we embody and enact worship in a mode that appropriately interrupts our standard weekly rhythm in days that are anything but “standard” “business-as-usual” days in this nation;
- To demonstrate to others (religious and not) in our local civic context that we dissent from the harm being done in our name, and especially the sanctioning of that harm in the name of “Christianity” and in ways that insulate “white” communities while targeting other communities;
- To help the change the conversation, and have this interruptive change experienced in our bodies, by physically enacting postures that make clear to ourselves and others that these times are not normal and we must break from “business-as-usual.”

**Proposed Plan to be honed together at a series of mid- to late-August 2018 meetings**

1) Two meetings of committed or potentially committed clergy, laity and congregations on Tuesday, August 21, 2018 and August 28th at 7:00 p.m. (location to be announced) to work out details. Perhaps more required; we can discern this together.
2) Worship every week, Sunday, September 9th through Sunday November 25th (12 Sundays), a one hour of ecumenical worship under the shared statement: We are church. We confess. We bear witness.
3) Worship services will be held at one location each Sunday of September, a different location in October, and a third location in November (final locations to be determined together; buildings that symbolize the crisis at the border, the violence against Black and Latino/a communities, and the banning of “Muslims”).
4) Ideally, each participating congregation will organize and lead worship one to three times; each congregation will either announce to their community an invitation to “We are church” worship and move their entire regular worship service to this service. Or congregations will
take part in “We are church” but also still have their regular church services at their home buildings. (This is obviously a decision each participating congregation will have to make.)  
5) Prior to August meetings to finalize details and meet in-person, electronic organizing and communication will take place so some pieces are emergent even before these meetings.  
6) It is, of course, assumed we bear different theological positions and different rituals (some of us who may want to participate may not even identify as Christian, but may too come out of the U.S.-Protestant tradition). These services are an opportunity to engage across theological/ritual lines as we participate by following the leadership of whichever hosting clergy/laiy/congregation is leading on a given Sunday.  
7) For further context please see: https://sojo.net/articles/unholy-silence-white-churches. Many clergy are speaking up about our political crisis. We must join them.