“Midnight Protest: When Theology Meets Politics”
By Rev. S. LaTrell Harrison

This reflection is inspired by Peter Storey’s Protest at Midnight, a powerful account of his ministry as a Methodist leader in South Africa during the long, painful years of apartheid. Storey served in a church that had to decide what it meant to be faithful amid systemic injustice. The book is not merely a history; it is a testimony—a reminder that following Jesus often means resisting the powers that harm and divide.

In that spirit, Storey offers a striking truth: “All things begin in theology and end in politics.” His words invite deep reflection, especially for pastors and congregations today who wrestle with whether to take public stands on issues of justice and human rights. Storey’s life shows that theology is never an abstract idea. What we believe about God inevitably shapes how we live, how we treat others, and the kind of world we help build.

If we believe that all people bear the image of God, that conviction will—must—have public consequences. It will shape how we think about race, poverty, immigration, the environment, and every other structure that affects human dignity. In that sense, theology and politics are not opposites; theology gives politics its moral direction.

To see this more clearly, I often turn to the narrative of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:16-26). They were jailed not for violence but for freeing an enslaved young girl whose suffering had become profitable to her oppressors. Sit with that for a moment: two disciples of Christ imprisoned for bringing healing and wholeness to a human being. Their midnight songs of praise were not just hymns of hope—they were acts of protest, declarations that God’s justice begins even in bondage.

Politics itself is not the problem. The problem is how it has been weaponized—to divide, dominate, and declare some voices unworthy of being heard. In its truest sense, politics is how we pursue the common good. It is built on shared meanings about who counts, who has power, and how communities flourish together. When the church steps back from these realities out of fear of “being political,” it risks abandoning its responsibility to be a moral conscience in public life.

If our theology begins with a God who liberates the captive and heals the broken, our politics must reflect that same compassion. Engaging in human rights work, speaking out for justice, or standing with those on the margins is not stepping outside our faith—it is a faithful extension of it.

We get stuck when we confine theology to the sanctuary and leave politics to others. But language—and faith—are broader than that. When theology begins with love, it ends with justice; when discipleship begins in the mind, it ends in the world. So the midnight protest continues—in every believer who chooses wholeness over fear and freedom over silence.

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