

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF UPPER SOUTH CAROLINA

The Rt. Rev. W. Andrew Waldo

A Pastoral Letter to the Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina

16 October 2020

Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I greet you on this day with a message of hope at a time of great division and discord as pivotal elections across the nation quickly approach.

As many of you know, the vision of the Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina is to “make, equip and send mature disciples of Jesus Christ.” Its intent is to point us all in the same direction, that is, toward the faithful and deep practice of Jesus’ teachings out of gratitude for God’s grace, love and mercy towards us. Christian maturity therefore involves daily *intention*, as we travel the joyful, long-term, and sacred journey toward Christ. A key hope and promise of this journey is that others might truly be able to say of us, “See how these Christians love one another!”

Today, we face a world that has increasingly nurtured hostility in relationships with others who may think differently. It is a world that appears to be bound in dystopian practices of pride, control, violence, deceit, arrogance and fear, lording power over others. At the same time, I am gratefully aware that there are many who faithfully and persistently strive for justice, peace, and the respect for human dignity. For, as Jesus said, “[Lording power over others] *is not so* among you...whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be servant of all.” (*Mark 10:42-44*)

Our task, when surrounded by the dividing walls of hostility, is to be the bearers of good news, proclaiming that true power is found in humility. My colleague, Bishop Mark Beckwith (Episcopal Diocese of Newark, resigned), recently brought to the House of Bishops’ attention an organization known as Braver Angels. Its mission is to de-polarize American politics.

Bishop Beckwith, a progressive bishop, is among leaders of this organization who traverse the political and religious spectrum, including conservative evangelical clergy and lay leaders. With a strong nod to Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address in March, 1865, in which the President used the words, “with malice toward none, with charity for all...,” and called upon the “better angels of our nature,” Braver Angels has been building bridges with that intention.

Braver Angels encourages visitors to sign this bridge-building pledge: “Regardless of how the election turns out, I will not hold hate, disdain, or ridicule for those who voted differently from me.

Whether I am pleased or upset about the outcome, I will seek to understand the concerns and aspirations of those who voted differently and will look for opportunities to work with people with whom I disagree.”

It's simple. It's faithful.

You can sign the pledge online at <https://braverangels.org/what-we-do/with-malice-toward-none/>, and I encourage all members of this diocese to make this commitment in advance of the election.

Every Christian who chooses love over hate, hope over despair, and kindness over contempt will make a godly and hope-filled difference.

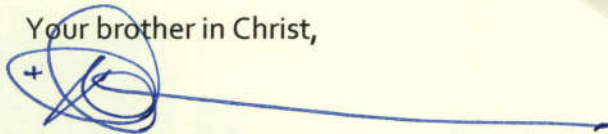
The prayer attributed to St. Francis with which we are so familiar calls us from the heights of faith to the way upon which Jesus calls us follow him.

Let us pray.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

May the Peace of the Lord be always with you.

Your brother in Christ,



The Rt. Rev. Andrew Waldo
Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina