

St. James' E-pistle

June 19, 2015

Pulpit Notes

Brothers and Sisters:

You have all seen the news of the horrendous shootings at the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. One always hates to rush to judgment or jump on the commenter bandwagon when it comes to tragedies or sensitive situations.

On the other hand, to say nothing is unacceptable when a pastoral, gospel-oriented word is required.

The first word is grief. We grieve with the families of those who lost their loved ones. There is no way to express such grief when a loved one is murdered. Please pray for the souls of the victims - and for the soul of the murderer, that he may be changed by Christ's eternal love.

The second word is chilling. The fact that it took place in a church strikes us close to home. We can all imagine being in the church or chapel for a worship service or bible study. The fact that he sat with them for an hour before opening fire chills me to the bone.

The third word is outrage. I've been in touch with friends from that area, and with many black friends around the country who have been talking about this incident. Outrage comes on many levels:

1. Outrage that some have said this was not a racist attack. It was reported on at least one news show that this was an attack on Christianity rather than on blacks. In another, it was suggested that the young man was probably mentally ill. This, despite the perpetrator's own words (as reported by a survivor) and his donning apparel bearing flags of former white supremacist governments worn today by such groups as the Aryan Nation.

Going further, we must recognize that this lone attack does not come out of thin air. It's not just a single madman. If he is mentally ill, it has been fed by centuries of animosity, of contempt for and fear of blacks. This is bigger than one person and it is about race.

2. Outrage at a double standard. All over the social media, you will find countless images of the young man in a bullet-proof vest being casually led to a car (he was arrested while holding a loaded .45 caliber pistol, though he did not resist arrest). On FaceBook, Twitter, and Instagram, I have seen this photo posted next the images of unarmed (and innocent in some cases) black people being tackled and slammed to the ground.

Are these fair comparisons? I don't know. But in the last years and months, the news has been full of incidents where innocent and unarmed black people are shot even while

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complying with police commands. If I were a black person in the United States, I would feel some outrage at the relatively gentle way this murderer of nine people was treated.

3. Outrage that there has been yet another mass shooting in a country where mass shootings are becoming commonplace. This outrage is not limited to the black community alone but across the country. This ought to be our own outrage, too. The murderer had just received the murder weapon as a birthday present for his 21st birthday.

We have to ask ourselves as Christians how to combat this warped and UNChristian idea that a weapon intended to kill other children of God is ever a good idea. Sure, target shooting is fun, sure, hunting has value. But to have guns for "self-protection" is a moral, a spiritual issue. Those who make self protection a goal miss the self-offering of the gospel, the message of Christ to "pick up your cross and follow."

To choose the path of love rather than fear and hate (and a handgun kept at home for "protection" can only signal fear and/or hate), is our dangerous path. That's why we keep our churches open when insurance companies beg us to lock them up.

Bishop Chip Stokes of New Jersey wrote in response to the shootings: "In the wake of the massacre at Emanuel Church in Charleston, some will be inclined to withdraw in fear; to close and lock the doors of our church buildings and to shut out the stranger. This is not the response Jesus Christ or his gospel calls us to. Fear is contrary to faith. As scripture tells us, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). As people of faith, our response should not be to withdraw and hide, but rather to step forward and reach out in love; to be bold in our witness to the gospel and to our Lord, who is the Prince of Peace."

For my part, I ask you to pray for the victims of this murder. Their names are: Clementa Pinckney (the senior pastor at the church), Sharonda Coleman Singleton, Tywanza Sanders, Ethel Lance, Susie Jackson, Cynthia Hurd, Myra Thompson, Daniel Simmons Sr., DePayne Middleton Doctor.

I ask you to pray for the soul of this nation as well. I know all the statistics used by gun advocates as well as gun control advocates, by racists and by civil rights leaders. There is no need to quote them again. But we can all recognize that something is not right here - that the growing sense of injustice and despair is not the will of God.

Each one of these victims is your brother or sister. Each of those who arm themselves against perceived threats (often becoming threats themselves) is nevertheless your brother or sister. Until all are reconciled, the work of the Kingdom of God is not over. So let us pray and pray unceasingly that we can be bearers of the light of Christ in dark times.

In Christ,

Chuck+

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The News of the Diocese

Praying For Peace Everywhere:

Let us continue to light a candle for peace in the Holy Land - and everywhere. Prayer is our most potent antidote to hatred.

1. Candle for Peace

Please also light a candle on Fridays - holy to both faiths - for Peace

Let us Light Candles for Peace

Two mothers, one plea:

Now, more than ever, during these days of so much crying,
on the day that is sacred to both our religions, Friday, Sabbath Eve

Let us light a candle in every home - for peace:

A candle to illuminate our future, face to face,

A candle across borders, beyond fear.

From our family homes and houses of worship

Let us light each other up,

Let these candles be a lighthouse to our spirit

Until we all arrive at the sanctuary of peace.

2. The Mothers Prayer:

God of Life:

You who heals the broken hearted, binding up our wounds.

Please hear this prayer of mothers.

You did not create us to kill each other

Nor to live in fear or rage or hatred in your world. You created us so that we allow each other to sustain Your Name in this world:

Your name is Life, your name is Peace.

For these I weep, my eye sheds water:

For our children crying in the night,

For parents holding infants, despair and darkness in their hearts.

For a gate that is closing – who will rise to open it before the day is gone?

With my tears and with my constant prayers, With the tears of all women deeply pained at these harsh times

I raise my hands to you in supplication: Please God have mercy on us.

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Hear our voice that we not despair That we will witness life with each other, That we have mercy one for another, That we share sorrow one with the other, That we hope, together, one for another.

Inscribe our lives in the book of Life

For Your sake, our God of Life Let us choose Life.

For You are Peace, Your world is Peace and all that is Yours is Peace,

May this be your will

And let us say Amen.

Sheikha Ibtisam Mahameed and Rabba Tamar Elad-Appelbaum
English Translation Amichai Lau-Lavie

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The News of the Church

**Congratulations to our
High School Graduates!**

**Chris Granados-Kramer
Rachel Ogden
Christian Schroeder
Charlie Urban-Mead**

**Good work
And
God Bless!**

Take Some Business Cards: We have created some Business Cards for St. James' Church, and we want you to take them. These cards have our service times and contact information for

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the church office, but no personal names. Carry them around with you because you never know when you might have a conversation that leads you to talk about Christ and your church. If you have a card with you, you can simply give it to them and let them know it has all the information they might want to get started exploring St. James'. When we run out, we can always get more, so please take a handful this Sunday!

Nursery School Board Member Sought: The St. James' Nursery School Board needs a new member from within the parish. Tanya Hall has served faithfully and skillfully in this capacity for the past few years, but has decided it's time to step down. You do not have to have a child in the Nursery School (or even in that age range) to become a member. Just see me. The board's job is to organize fundraisers and work on marketing/publicity for the school. Discussion at the board meetings centers on what helps the school better serve its students.

Invitation to a Parish Celebration: Brian Rance and Melinda Harris cordially invite you to attend a second annual parish celebration of fellowship and friendship at their home at 9 Marshall Road (corner of Netherwood) from **5:00 to 10:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 20th**. Dinner and refreshments will be served. Parents should feel free to bring children. If you plan on attending, please RSVP to brian.rance@freshfields.com or by phone to 212-360-1854. Please indicate the number attending. Please don't feel obliged to bring any food or gifts. There should be plenty for everyone.

Summer Youth Conference: I strongly encourage any young people (rising 6th graders to rising college Freshmen) to attend the Summer Youth Conference at Incarnation Camp Center this summer. The dates are **August 16-22**. More information is on a flier below. I have financial aid for anyone interested. Again, I strongly urge this!

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Please keep the following people in your prayers:

Ruth Blanding, John Bohlmann, Susie Buhalis, Jim And Sharyn Burke, Joann Clark, Michael Day, Dottie Drake, Ross Eames, Jr., Linkin Ewalt, Steven Foote, Heather Francese, Jane Gagliardoto, Jack Gordy, Robert Guariglia, Harold Hall, Dalton K., Edie Kline, Barbara Knakal, Ashley Konyn, Rosemary Leuken, Joanne Lynn, Doris Mack, Gordon Mackenzie, Virginia Mackenzie, Andrew Mendelson, Rev. Tim Millard, Charles Pardee (husband of Sally), Clifford Plass, Gerald Plass, Grace Plass, Linda Plass, Deborah Porach, John Robinson, Richard Secor, James Sheeky, Naomi Sleight, Tracy, Candace Vincent, Cassidy Way, Cliff Wells and Shawn Wheeler.

Schedules

A Note about Schedules: The names you see below are those listed on their respective schedules. There are often times when, due to sickness or travel, substitutes are asked to fill in or trade positions. This will probably NOT be reflected in the lists below—so, if there is an inconsistency between what you see here and what you see on Sunday, that is alright.

Birthdays (this past week):	Anna Marie Pitcher
Birthdays (next week):	Suzanne Schroeder and David Triola
Acolytes:	June 21: Russell Urban-Mead, John Beyer and Anna Clark June 28: Bryanna Burkhardt, Chris Granados-Kramer and Amelia McNamara
Altar Guild:	June 21: Team Number III June 28: Team Number III
8 a.m. Readers:	June 21: Angela Henry and Sue DeLorenzo June 28: Debbie Belding and Jim Smyth
10 a.m. Readers:	June 21: Patty Caswell/Andy Hall June 28: Donna Beyer/Judy Douglass
Ushers:	June 21: Andrew and Tonya Hall June 28: Judy Douglass and Vince Asher

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Pledge Clerks:	June 21: Tanya Hall and Anna Marie Pitcher June 28: Paul Littlefield and Dean Caswell
Parish Cycle of Prayer:	June 21: Liz Van Wagner and Art Veach June 28: Janet Veith, Carol Vinall and Dick Wagner
Coffee Hour Hosts:	June 21: Deirdre Mae Micker and Anna Marie Pitcher June 28: Saira Shahani, Brian Rance and Rick Schroeder

This Week's Lectionary

1 Samuel 17: (1a, 4-11, 19-23), 32-49

Psalm 133

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

Mark 4:35-41

NOTE: Audio recordings of some sermons are now available on St. James' website, www.stjameshydepark.org Look under "Worship"

Sermon Preached on
Third Sunday after Pentecost
(June 14, 2015)

"Napoleon Complex"

When St. James' was founded in 1811, Napoleon Bonaparte was emperor of France. He was 5'6" - about an inch taller than me. Average for his day.

He was considered the greatest general of his day and though a despot, actually instituted many progressive reforms that we take for granted today. "He established a system of public education, abolished the vestiges of feudalism, emancipated Jews and other religious minorities, enacted legal protections for an emerging middle class," and created the separation of church and state in government.

But, the English - who were regularly at war with France - started painting him as small in stature. A short guy in a big man's world. Why? To humiliate him. To minimize his stature - literally. To make him a joke. He was the angry little man.

This made such an impression on the world that Alfred Adler, the famous psychoanalyst of the early 20th century, coined the term Napoleon Complex to describe people who feel inferior

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because they're little, so they overcompensate with aggressive behavior. Not really fair to Napoleon, was it?

But it points to our sense that bigger is better, stronger is better, power is good. We embrace that even when we say we don't. For example, did you know that in presidential elections, it is almost always the taller candidate who wins?

The trick is, everyone is small when you get down to it. School children are smaller than teachers or even the bigger kids. When you grow up, you find that workers are smaller - or at least weaker than bosses. Grown ups can always find someone bigger. The same applies for companies, nations, churches, you name it. There's always someone bigger. And if you still feel big, go out to the ocean. Or to space. Compare our planet to Jupiter or the sun. Compare our sun to other Suns, to the Galaxy - and so on. The biggest, most powerful of us is tiny. Infinitesimal.

And that's okay. Small's not a bad place to be if you don't feel like you have to be big.

In fact, God chooses the small and the weak to do some of God's best work.

- Look at David in today's Old Testament reading. He was the smallest of his brothers and so young that nobody even considered him. He was too little to bother a prophet with. But God thought otherwise.

- Or look at the mustard seed in the gospel. It was thought to be the smallest of all seeds, yet it produced the biggest of shrubs.

Why does God choose small and weak to work through? Maybe because most of the time, WE tend to choose the big and strong. And when we choose the big, we think it's our own power doing it. We get mighty pleased with ourselves. We think we did it by ourselves - that we DESERVE what we got. We fail to appreciate how much we are helped by others - and especially by God.

In many exploits in scripture - military or otherwise - God keeps saying, let's go smaller, let's use fewer people, smaller, weaker. Let's show that not just a seed, not just a small seed, but the smallest shall become the largest plant. Let's see the smallest child become the leader of Israel. That way, we can know that all good comes from God, not from our own strength.

And the essence of the gospel is that salvation - restored relationship with God - does not come from our own deserving but because God loves us.

Many say that small churches like ours are irrelevant. Mostly, that comes from members of big churches. But they make the same mistake Samuel made at first - or soldiers going against Israel made, or that many in our nation make - that size is what really matters.

We know that what matters is allowing, inviting God to work through us. We are David. We are mustard seeds. But only if we choose.

I'm thinking of our high school graduates, too. (Middle school, too). You'll be lowly freshman next year. It may seem like nobody takes you seriously. Your ideas may be overlooked, ignored... But it's okay. You are God's, and God has a way of using you if you are willing. In fact, when you don't have delusions of grandeur, of you own importance, then it's much easier to let God work through you.

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So don't get a Napoleon Complex. Instead, embrace your smallness, because through it, God can do marvelous things. And what's better than being part of God's marvelous wonder and mystery? Amen.