



JUNE 2, 2020

# The Episcopal Diocese of Utah

The Rt. Rev. Scott B. Hayashi

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

How do we live in our present time of a pandemic and national turmoil? How do we survive our anger, frustration, hurt, sense of helplessness, fear, and all the emotions we seem to feel all at once.

At a time such as this, we look to our leaders, spiritual and political, for guidance. As an Episcopalian, I try to stay grounded in the Covenant or agreement that I made at my baptism - I was baptized as an adult - so I remember it - and that I have reaffirmed many times over the years. The Baptismal Covenant is fundamental to who we are as Episcopalians.

We make the Covenant with God and with each other. We believe in God and hold that our belief should have a direct impact on how we live our lives. I confess that I am not perfect. I have not always lived up to the Covenant that I have made with God and with you, the people of our diocese. When that happens, I “repent and return to the Lord.”

The Baptismal Covenant also serves as a guide to how I look at the world and the actions of myself and other spiritual and political leaders. That is, I hold the Baptismal Covenant as a conviction. I define conviction to mean something that is held so deeply that a person would will it to be universal.

To me, it is not a question of being conservative or progressive. People, who self identify as being progressive or conservative, are equally able to be guided by and adhere to the Baptismal Covenant. I find the labels of conservative and progressive to be counter productive. Especially, when there is a value judgment attached to them.

The final two promises that we make in the Covenant are that we will “seek and serve Christ in all persons,” and love our neighbor as ourselves. And, that “we will strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.” We make the promises and we acknowledge that we need God’s help to be faithful to them. We respond, “I will with God’s help.”

Do my actions and decisions and stances that I hold and make fall in line with these two promises? I hope so, but I am certain that there are people who would say not. Especially during this tense time.

Do the decisions, actions and stances of our elected leaders uphold these two promises? ( I recognize that they are not all Episcopalians.) Most recently, with the highest office holder in our land, no. (And, I continue to pray for him.)

I began this letter by asking the question, how do we live in our present time of a pandemic and national turmoil? I did this to remind ourselves, in the the midst of national turmoil, that we are in a pandemic that has claimed the lives of over 100,000 people in the United States and it is still climbing. Do not let the present turmoil distract us from that grim reality. We need to continue to take steps to stay safe and to be wise about how we make moves to reopen.

How do we live our lives? Prayerfully, while continually seeking to serve Christ in ALL persons and striving for justice and peace for ALL. We do this together. Our Covenant is with God and with each other. We need God and one another. This is how we survive the anger, frustration, hurt, sense of helplessness, fear, and all the emotions that we feel in this time. This is true at all times, but especially, now.

So, I commend these prayers to you, praying them is one way we of seeking and receiving God’s help:

O Most mighty and merciful God, in this time of great sickness, we flee unto thee for succor. Deliver us, we beseech thee, from our peril; give strength and skill to all those who minister to the sick; prosper the means made use for their cure; and grant that, perceiving how frail and uncertain our life is, we may apply our hearts unto that heavenly wisdom which leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

– “In Time of Great Sickness and Mortality,” 1928 Book of Common Prayer, 45

Compassionate God, support and strengthen all those who reach out in love, concern, and prayer for the sick and distressed. In their acts of compassion, may they know that they are your instruments. In their concerns and fears may they know your peace. In their prayer may they know your steadfast love. May they not grow weary or faint-hearted, for your mercy’s sake. Amen.

For the Human Family

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For a Person in Trouble or Bereavement

O merciful Father, who hast taught us in thy holy Word that thou dost not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men: Look with pity upon the sorrows of thy servant for whom our prayers are offered. Remember him, O Lord, in mercy, nourish his soul with patience, comfort him with a sense of thy goodness, lift up thy countenance upon him, and give him peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For our Country

Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For the President of the United States and all in Civil Authority

O Lord our Governor, whose glory is in all the world: We commend this nation to thy merciful care, that, being guided by thy Providence, we may dwell secure in thy peace. Grant to the President of the United States, the Governor of this State (or Commonwealth), and to all in authority, wisdom and strength to know and to do thy will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness, and make them ever mindful of their calling to serve this people in thy fear; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

For those who suffer for the sake of Conscience

O God our Father, whose Son forgave his enemies while he was suffering shame and death: Strengthen those who suffer for the sake of conscience; when they are accused, save them from speaking in hate; when they are rejected, save them from bitterness; when they are imprisoned, save them from despair; and to us your servants, give grace to respect their witness and to discern the truth, that our society may be cleansed and strengthened. This we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ, our merciful and righteous Judge. Amen.

For Social Justice

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart [and especially the hearts of the people of this land], that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In Times of Conflict

O God, you have bound us together in a common life. Help us, in the midst of our struggles for justice and truth, to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, and to work together with mutual forbearance and respect; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Faithfully,

+Scott B. Hayashi  
Bishop of The Episcopal Diocese of Utah