

Michael B. Curry, "Healing a House Divided"

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Holden Thorp

Welcome, everyone. What a thrill it is to welcome you to this event that we have been looking forward to for such a long time. To have the presiding Bishop Curry visiting us here at Washington University, it is the goal of the Danforth Center on Religion and Politics to embody great teaching and scholarship, but also to host conversations like this that draw folks interested in the topics of religion and politics in America to venues like this for what is obviously going to be another very important conversation. So thanks to all of you for joining us and congratulations to Marie Griffith and the folks at the Danforth Center on putting together yet another spectacular event. It is a special privilege for me to be here to welcome my old friend, Michael Curry, who I've known since I was a parishioner at Holy Family, long before I came to St. Louis, and those of you who know Michael know that he is an inspirational preacher, he is a leader of exceptional compassion and courage and I've never been prouder to be an Episcopalian than when Michael Curry was named the presiding Bishop. So Michael thank you for all you do for us. And to introduce Michael, another person of extraordinary generosity and vision who made it possible for us to be here today, his vision for the Center and all we are doing today has transformed the University and given us a new way to engage with the public on topics that are of great importance, so it's my pleasure now to turn it over to one of the greatest friends that Washington University has, Senator Jack Danforth.

John Danforth

Thanks, Holden. The focus on this Center is on the relationship between religion and American politics. Historically and constitutionally, Americans have recognized how destructive that relationship can be. Well aware of Europe's long religious wars, our founders erected what Jefferson called a wall of separation between church and state. In recent times, many have warned against the misuse of religion and politics: the use of religiously freighted issues to energize the conservative base and divide the nation. So from our beginning a guiding American principle has been the church and state are separate and that we must resist the entanglement of the two. But the separation of church and state does not compel the separation of faith and politics. Many people believe that the exercise of their religion cannot be confined within the houses where they worship, and that it extends to all of life, including politics. They're in a tradition of believers who have spoken to power since Moses confronted Pharaoh. The name for speaking from faith to power is the prophetic ministry. Its origin was in ancient Israel where men who claimed to represent God spoke forcefully against the injustices of their time, "They sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample the head of the poor into dust of the Earth and push the afflicted out of the way," said Amos. The prophets of Israel had a

common message: they condemned idolatry, they condemned injustice, but they had different ways of delivering their message. Jeremiah stood in the gates of Jerusalem, railing against those who passed by. Hosea's words were just as powerful but they were also hopeful and encouraging. He spoke of God's enduring love despite the infidelity of God's people, "Come let us return to the Lord, for it is He who has torn and He will heal us, He has struck down and He will bind us up." Hosea said that the people of Israel didn't deserve God's love, but God loved them; they didn't deserve to be called God's people, but they were God's people. Each of us who is called to speak prophetically to American politics will have to find his or her own voice. There will be a strong tendency to adopt the style of Jeremiah, to condemn, to get into the faces of the powerful. That would be understandable. Any passing glance at the present state of politics, its dysfunction, its nastiness, leads to the conclusion that they have it coming, "Let 'em have it." But here's another thought. Most Americans aren't crude, they aren't nasty, they want a government that's fair and that functions. Most Americans are as God created them, they are good and they are longing for someone to evoke that goodness, and it seems that no one is doing that, not the politicians, not the pundits, not the media. Quite the opposite, they have worked us into a perpetual state of rage. So if no one else is appealing to the goodness of the American people, why not us? This should be our ministry, our work, to break the vicious cycle of anger in which America now finds itself and to call out the goodness, the fairness, the decency of the American people that is latent but very real.

Which brings us to our speaker. He is the presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church so he has considerable administrative responsibilities, but in my view, every day he spends in the office would be better spent on the road. He is a gifted preacher with just the message -- his wife might not agree with that [in response to laughter from Michael and the audience at "better spent on the road"] -- He is a gifted preacher with just the message America needs to hear. We are fallen, that's for sure, we don't deserve to be loved but we are loved, we don't deserve to be called God's people but we are God's people. Bishop Michael Curry was born in Chicago, grew up in Buffalo, New York and graduated from Hobart College and Yale Divinity School. He was ordained priest in 1978 and served in churches in North Carolina, Ohio, and Maryland. He was Bishop of North Carolina from 2000 until his election as presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in 2015. He has been active in matters of social justice, including immigration policy and in strengthening local congregations. He is a preacher, author, husband, and father, and is a voice that must be heard. Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor and a delight to present to you an Hosea for our time, Bishop Michael Curry.

Michael Curry

Thank you, Senator. Thank you, Senator. And I thank you not only for this invitation and opportunity, but for your encouragement and wisdom. I can't thank you enough, sir. And

it's a joy and a privilege to be with you and my friend, the Bishop of this diocese, Bishop Wayne Smith, and my old parishioner from North Carolina, the Provost of this University, I used to see him every Easter Vigil whenever I would make my visitations. But he would be in church every Sunday, not just on Easter, he was always there! And for all of you who have gathered, it really is a real privilege and a blessing and you know that, I know that Senator Danforth is your Senator but some of us consider him our Senator, so it's a blessing to be here so thank you, and I hope you're glad to be here. It's good to be here.

Back on March 10th, 2016 during the presidential campaign, then presidential candidate, Donald Trump spoke at a campaign rally in Fayetteville, North Carolina. The rally was disrupted by protesters as many of the rallies had been, and you'll remember back during that time, it was kind of the normal, it was almost a liturgy, he would rally up the troops on one side and the protesters would come out on the other. And so that happened over and over again and this happened in Fayetteville. Law enforcement officials eventually intervened and took the protesters out. As they were taking the protesters out, a man named John Franklin McGraw, he was a white guy and he jumped out from the crowd and leapt over the police and sheriffs and punched one of the protesters, a guy named Rakeem Jones, who was a black guy, I mean he still is black, but a black guy, anyway he leapt over and punched him in the face. The result was of course that McGraw was arrested as well and eventually was arraigned and I think he got a thirty-day sentence and twelve months probation or something like that. And when he was interviewed soon after this incident, I mean probably in the same day, he was quoted as having said, "he deserved it," referring to Rakeem, "he deserved it." He went on to say, "The next time we see him, we might have to kill him," and then he added, "We don't know who he is, he might be with a terrorist organization." Notice the language: "We don't know who he is, he might be with a terrorist organization." A month later or so, whenever the hearing, the sentencing happened in court, McGraw had changed his perspective and I don't think it was a matter of opportunism because he was still going to get sentenced to some time in jail and to probation, but the two men met again in the courtroom, after the sentencing, after McGraw had been sentenced, and they faced each other in a courtroom and the Raleigh News and Observer overheard them saying this, "McGraw speaking to Jones: 'If I had met you on the street and the same thing occurred, looking back on it now I think I would have told you to go home 'cause one of us is gonna get hurt. That's what I would've said.'" and then he added this, "But we are caught up in a political mess today, you and me, and we gotta heal our country." "We are caught up in a political mess, you and me, and we gotta heal our country." An old slave once sang what is now a spiritual which says, so simply, "If you cannot preach like Peter, and you cannot pray like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus, how he died to save us all, there is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole, there really is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul." There is, and it can, and we will.

I put a title on this talk and I hope what I say is consistent with the title because I think I did that when Marie, when you all talked with me, and that was probably two months ago, but I think . . . and if not, just enjoy. But I entitled this "To Heal a House Divided," borrowing from Abe Lincoln's speech when he was elected Senator from Illinois where he quoted Jesus who talked about a house divided against itself cannot stand. And he was speaking at a time when our country was trying to figure out how can you be a nation dedicated to the proposition that all people are equal, and have slavery in it. The nation hadn't figured out how to do that, and it was a terrible civil war that sorted it out. But Abe knew, as Jesus had spoken: a house divided against itself cannot stand. Brother McGraw was right, we are caught up in a political mess today, you and me, and we gotta heal our country. We can, and we will.

Let me suggest two ways. Just two and then we'll stop and we may have time for questions. The first is, we need a revival. Now I know for an Episcopalian to be talking about a revival, that in itself ought to be newsworthy, but I really want to suggest that we actually need a national revival. And a national revival, it doesn't require an altar call, but it does require an altar call when you leave this place and when we disperse and go out into this world. We need a revival of relationships. Now stay with me, don't go to sleep on me. A revival of relationships. Let me give you an example. I want you to notice McGraw's words right after he punched Rakeem in the face and someone asked him and he said "He deserved it, the next time we see him we might have to kill him because we don't know who he is." I want to suggest that in any culture, any country, where people don't know each other, that is a formula for social deconstruction, that is a formula for the undoing of the social compact, that is a formula for the destruction of the very democracy that it seeks to be. This is not rocket science. We need a revival of relationships because the very democratic republic that we are depends on it.

Let me unpack that. And I think I'm singing to the choir. I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. But let me, but rather than hearing it from me, many of you have probably read Bill Bishop's book, *The Great Sort* which came out in, I don't know, 2007, 2008, somewhere thereabouts, and the title of the book, *The Great Sort*, is fascinating because listen to the title, *The Big Sort*, excuse me, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded is Tearing Us Apart*. Why the clustering of the like-minded is tearing us apart, and he goes on and it's basically a statistical study of American society that goes a little deeper than the usual red state, blue state kind of stuff, but actually gets down into the zip codes. And what he has found is that America in the last thirty to forty years has essentially segregated itself, not primarily along racial lines, though we still have some of that, but in terms of voluntary housing patterns, nobody imposed it, this is like the spirit of Jim Crow said, "I'm gonna come up with a new way to get 'em" and it's like Jim Crow said, "I know how to do it, I'll get them to get together with people who think like they do" and it's just

sort of happened. Nobody programmed this ahead of time, where we kind of re-segregated or segregated ourselves into communities of like-mindedness, which on a simple level means, and the politicians know this, that you can look at the zip codes and basically you've got Republican leaning zip codes and Democratic leaning zip codes, you've got Independent zip codes. And you have a few where there's a mix of folks but for the most part we have actually almost across the board re-segregated ourselves into communities of like-mindedness. And it's not just politicians, I'm not blaming politicians, I mean we've seen good ones, we've got a good one right here, so I'm not blaming them, I mean they've got to get elected so they're going to read the numbers, but the marketing experts know this, they know where to market Crest toothpaste and where to market other kinds. They've figured that out, they know who likes and who buys what kind, but Bishop goes on and he says not only is this residential segregation according to communities of like-mindedness, he says when you look at - well let me just say it this way: the people who watch Bill O'Reilly tonight at eight o'clock are not going to turn to msnbc to watch Rachel Maddow, right? And there may be the folk in between who may watch Anderson Cooper, I don't know, you know, in between, but basically we watch, the cable news has made it possible for me to watch the news that agrees with my opinion and not to hear a voice that differs from my opinion. And this segregation, it gets even worse, I mean it goes beyond just kind of the residential living and beyond just kind of the newscast, it actually goes, and he documents this, and others have picked up since Bishop wrote his book, the whole homeschooling movement has increased this even more. Where we don't go to school together so you don't have children who are getting used to being with children who are unlike them. Now think about the consequences of that. What you get are communities where people reinforce each other in their already preconceived notions and ideas, communities of like-mindedness, and Bishop and other commentators have gone on to say, that what has now happened is, we keep reinforcing ourselves in our own given positions, we don't have any interchange with people who have a different one and so slowly but surely the voices of the extreme become the norm and the center is silent, what I actually like to call the sensible center, is actually silenced. And if the center does not hold, I think W. H. Auden taught us that, if the center does not hold, the society will not.

We need a revival. Y'all with me now? We need a revival of relationships, of human relationships across difference, difference of religion, difference of ethnicity, difference of political ideology. We need a revival of human relationships. And the Bible was trying to tell us that a long - now I know you all didn't come for a sermon - but, if you take a look at Genesis chapters two and three, it's the story of Adam and Eve in the garden, I mean those stories are really creative. Stories are creative ways that folk can get into some deep stuff without having to do a whole lot of didactic narration. You know? You just tell the story and folk will get it. Think about it for a minute. I mean you remember the story of Adam and Eve - I didn't ask you if you remembered them personally - y'all remember the story? It's Adam

and Eve, you know God creates Adam and God realizes Adam is lonely and is not complete by himself and he needs another one, which is interesting, notice, he needs another one to be whole. You can't be whole by yourself. We were made for community. So you get Adam and Eve right, and they're in the garden and everything is fine because as long as Adam and Eve are in communion and relationship with God and with each other and with the creation around them, they are in paradise. The moment the relationships are broken, with God, with each other, with creation, that's when they get kicked out of the garden. My brothers, the Bible is trying to tell us something. The way to a kinder paradise, if you will, no, the way to live as God intended for human beings to live is in relationship with our God, with each other, with the creation. We were made for God, help us, we were made for each other. And we will find life together, and we get kicked out of the garden.

Oh we need a revival. Are y'all with me now? We need a revival of relationships. Just basic real human relationships. And the truth is, this is not hard to do. In fact, I can assure the Episcopal Church, and Bishop Smith is here, I can assure the Episcopal Church this won't cost the Episcopal Church one dime. This will not increase the federal deficit one dime. It won't cost anything except for us as human beings to make a commitment to each other. As simple as, I mean the Senator was telling me this morning we were talking about it, he said to a group of folk, "Why doesn't everybody here commit themselves to go out, and reach out, and touch somebody else who's in a different place than your are?" That don't cost you anything, well it might cost you a meal. That don't cost anything. What would happen if our churches were committed to the work of reconciliation to the point that every church in the Episcopal church, every church in the Episcopal Church, and the numbers say this like 7,000 of them, and I don't trust that number because the clergy are the ones who make up those numbers, most clergy were humanities majors, they were not mathematics or science majors, but if there's somewhere, there's about 7,000 Episcopal churches and the other Episcopal churches in the other 15, 16 countries that we're in, imagine if every one of those churches was committed to being in relationship with another community of faith different than they are. We could actually have a transformative effect on this world. But better than that, imagine if the 2 million or so Episcopalians, again clergy are doing accounting so don't trust it, but imagine if the 2 million or so Episcopalians were committed to being in relationship not just with their friends, of course, and family, but actually engaging in relationship with people who are different. Imagine if every Democrat had to find a Republican, every Republican had to find a Democrat. My point is, then, imagine this becoming ecumenical and interfaith, imagine if people of faith of all stripes and types were committed, you could transform this country. A revival of relationships may well be one of the keys to the revival of our democracy itself. Oh there is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded whole, there is balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.

I was in Utah this past weekend with the good people of Bishop Hayashi and the good people of the diocese there, where the Episcopal diocese, and I was telling the Senator about this this morning, the Episcopal diocese was celebrating the 150th anniversary and we had our general convention there just last year, the year before last, and it was fascinating to be at a dinner, at a gathering of ecumenical and interfaith leaders where there were some deep relationships. I mean real deep, not just kind of surface stuff but really deep relationships between Christians of various stripes and types and other peoples of faith and goodwill. And I was talking to one of the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Mormons, one of the Apostles in their community of faith, and I asked him, "You know, we're the Episcopal Church, and, you know, well, you know who we are," he said, "Yeah I know who y'all are," and I said, "And you're the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Mormons," I said, "you know, there are probably a few things that we don't agree on." And he said, "I know that." He said, "But we don't focus on those. We focus on the things that we actually do agree on and then we work from there." And he says, "We find that there's actually more space there because there we build relationships and those relationships can navigate any difference that comes along. Those relationships can navigate any difference that comes along."

I'm an old parish priest. I'm a parish priest. I've almost been a bishop equally, number of years, but I'm not as old as Wayne Smith, he's much older than I am, but I can tell you every premarital counseling thing that I did. I mean, I was vividly aware than in a marriage or any relationship it is the relationship that is the key, and if the relationship is nurtured and cared for, a couple can navigate all the differences and headaches that comes with marriage, that's just a part of it. But if the relationship is fractured, nothing else matters.

My brothers and sisters, we need a revival of relationships. And a revival of relationships will be a balm in Gilead for this democracy. But let me, I don't want to stop there. I'm looking at Marie just making sure I'm okay, she's still saying Amen. When she stops saying-- that's the Amen corner--when she stops, I know I'm in trouble.

But not only revival of relationships, and I really do mean that sincerely, if everybody, if we were committed to going out and being people who are pontifical, from the Latin *pontifex*, which means bridge, I mean that's actually a name that was attached to the Christian movement early--bridge-folk--those of us who follow Jesus, I think we got a bridging God, I think, because last time I checked that Jesus of Nazareth was a bridge between the divine and the human, that relationship that created new possibilities for humanity, that if we would make that commitment and just do it, we could be a leavening influence. And it wouldn't cost one dollar. But could help to save our world. A revival of relationship.

But a second, and this is the one that I may spend a little more time on, this is a little trickier and I got to be careful on this. This is where Senator Danforth may regret having invited me, but I'm going to give it a shot. I want to suggest that, and I'm speaking ecumenically now in the broadest sense of that term. I speak as a follower of Jesus. Let me engage you ecumenically, I think consistent with Jesus. We must reclaim the values and the ideals that we actually already share. We must reclaim the values and the ideals that we already share. I saw some of this as Bishop of North Carolina when North Carolina was going through a period, a very difficult period where our state legislature had enacted a series of legislative actions, many of which harmed the poor, the weakest, and the most vulnerable in our state. Those on unemployment insurance, those for whom Medicaid was a lifeline, children in food programs in schools, education, supplemental funding for education, voting rights. I mean you can go down the whole, it was just, and this was happening around the country I know, but North Carolina for whatever reason became an epicenter for this. And there was a movement than began to try to protest against that, and we had Jeremiahs who were protesting and they were getting arrested regularly and there were a lot of Episcopalian Jeremiahs and they were involved. And so the question was, how was the Bishop of North Carolina going to be supportive or quiet? And I made a decision, in consultation with others, that you can't be quiet, but you've got to find a way to appeal. Because I knew for a full well that Episcopalians in North Carolina, I don't know about Missouri, but Episcopalians in North Carolina, we used to joke that the political division was actually the altar-rail, that the Democrats were on the clergy side and the Republicans were on the lay side of the altar-rail. But I knew full well that our people were a mix and a variety of political perspectives, and rightfully so, that's their right and that they were. And yet I had to find a way to navigate, not to thread a needle, but to navigate that in such a way that we were bearing witness to our faith in the public sphere, but not doing it in a partisan and in a divisive way. And I stumbled into it, believe it or not, by actually paying attention to Jesus. Well go figure. And, because what I realized was, go to the values, at least in terms of church folk, that we share. Don't start with the issues, start with the values that we share and then let our common values help us to engage the various issues, which creates the possibility for creative solutions that nobody on either side had thought were possible before. Y'all see where I'm going on that?

And so, for example, if you are a follower of Jesus, and you say you follow him, not a brother in the Sermon on the Mount, I'm talking about Jesus, the brother. He said, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," right? The Sermon on the Mount verses 5, 6, and 7. It's there, believe me, its there. Now there was a long tradition of that that actually comes from Judaism, the rabbis taught that. Jesus kind of picked that up. So I found myself saying to those in legislative positions, I said, "Any legislation that has impact on human beings, and indeed on [unclear], but on human beings, it needs to pass in your mind the golden rule. Is this something you would want someone to do to you or to somebody you love? And

if it's not, then you got to find another creative possibility. Because if you can live by the golden rule, that's not just a matter of individual ethics that is a social ethic. And I'm not telling you how to do it, that's not my job, but I'm going to uphold," and I thought, I found that we were able to be in conversation with people who were in very different places. I said, "some of you got better minds than I do and can come up with creative ways to do that, and the truth is if we put our heads together it really does take a village, it does Republicans and Democrats, it does take liberals and conservatives, and independents and libertarians, it actually takes the village. And when we do it together we find a way forward, better than any of us could have figured out on our various divides.

I'm telling you, Jesus showed it to us. That at the level of our shared values, our deepest ideals, you find not only our fondest hopes, but the values that can show us the way. Jesus told us that a long time ago. Do you remember the parable of the Good Samaritan? Do y'all remember the parable? But think back. Remember, it's the one, this is Luke 10, and it begins when a lawyer comes to Jesus. And Jesus encountered lawyers, he encountered them a lot. I don't know about Bishop Smith, but I remember when I was a parish priest I used to jokingly say I spend a lot of time with morticians. Then I became a bishop and all of a sudden I find myself spending a lot of time with lawyers. And now I'm Presiding Bishop and there are lawyers everywhere, I mean they are everywhere! Well, notice, in the New Testament, in the Gospels, its lawyers who seem to consistently pull out, its like they tease out of Jesus by their questions, whether these are sincerely held questions or whether they're trying to trick him, who knows, it's probably a mix of all of that, but it's these conversations with lawyers that pull out of Jesus some of the deepest truths that he articulates.

It was in a conversation with a lawyer in both Matthew 22 and Luke 10, a lawyer who came up in Luke 10 who says, "Great teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Lawyers specialize in the Socratic method, right? They ask the questions either to elicit eternal truths or to get you to say something you didn't want to say but they want you to say. But "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Who knows what his motivation really was. I don't know, he really could have been searching or he could have been trying to trick him. "What must I do?" But Jesus is, see the brother didn't understand, Jesus was really smart, and so Jesus came back at him with another question. He said, "Well what does it say in the law?" See, at that point Jesus had him. And so the lawyer said, "Well Moses said you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." And the lawyer went to the law and found a law that Moses had articulated in Deuteronomy and a law that he had articulated in Leviticus and he brought them together. He said, "Love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew's version actually goes a little bit more into it and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself

and Jesus actually said 'on these two, hang all the laws and prophets.'" That's a way of saying this is what it is all about. Love of God and love of neighbor. That's the entirety, that's what the whole Bible is about, that's what Moses is trying to get at, that's what this whole religious tradition is about, and if it is not about love it is not about God. And if theological alignments won't do it, some of y'all remember Duke Ellington used to say, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." Love God, love your neighbor. And so the lawyer says that to Jesus and Jesus replies to him with these words, he says, "Do that and live." That the way of unselfish, sacrificial, other-directed love is the key to real life. So if you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus how he died to save us all. There is the balm in Gilead.

But the conversation doesn't stop there. The lawyer, being a lawyer, knows Jesus got him. And so he then says, "well, pray teacher that's good, love God and love the neighbor, but could we get a finer definition of the neighbor?" And, you know, Jesus was smart. If you've got the eternal wisdom of God buzzing around in you, you can probably handle any lawyer. So Jesus kind of comes back at him and instead of asking another question, Jesus said, "Let me tell you a story:"

There was a guy, a Jewish guy going from Jerusalem to Jericho. And he was walking on the Jericho Road, and everybody knew the Jericho Road, that was the part of town you did not want to travel in, they do not have good street lights, they do not have satellite, you know all that kind of stuff, and they don't have, I mean, you do not want to go on that road from Jerusalem to Jericho, especially at night. And so this guy was going from Jerusalem to Jericho and he got mugged. And he got beaten up. And a priest came by, you know, good priest, saw him but, whatever, he went on the other side. A Levite came by, saw him beaten up, went on the other side. And then a Samaritan came along, a descendent of those who, in the days of the Assyrians and their conquests, those who had intermingled with the Assyrians in the period of their exile, those who were considered defiled, those who were considered not one of us, those who were the other, y'all with me on that, that's what's going on here. One of those folk came by and, unlike the priest and the Levite, they saw the brother on the ground and he went over and poured oil in his wounds and took him to an inn and made sure that his health care was provided for (I'm not getting into that. I'm just telling a story, I'm not getting into the conversation), made sure his health care was provided for and that's it.

Now the power of that story emerges if you translate it into our time. I'm going to go ahead and say it. Hillary Clinton was going from Jerusalem and Jericho. And she was beaten up, you know, and on the ground. And the chairperson of Democratic Party went by and went on the other way. And another high official from the Democratic Party went on the other

way. And then Donald Trump came along, yeah y'all ain't laughing as much now but go ahead it's alright, yeah, right, Donald Trump came along and saw her in need and took care of her, took care of her. Or let's flip it some more. There was a Jew beaten up on the ground and it was Muslim who bathed and cared for him. Or better yet it was a Muslim on the ground and a Jew came and took care. Or it was a police officer on the ground and somebody from Black Lives Matter came. I mean, you can take this any way you want. Notice that in the parable love transcends our divisions, love transcends our differences. And Jesus then says, "Now who was the neighbor to the one who was on the ground?" And the lawyer then says, "The one who showed mercy." And notice, they found agreement. And you notice where they found the agreement--Jesus took him to the values that they shared, and there came up with the creative possibilities

Y'all see what I'm getting at now? It is that our deepest values, where we share them, that the actual common ground exists. It doesn't exist in the issues. That's where we're already divided. But if we come to the values that hold us together, that bind us together, we can actually find the shared space, the common ground, that place where we can all stand and band together out of the dialectic of our exchange and our debate, we can come up with creative solutions to our problems. That's how democracy can work again. Find the shared values. Find the shared values that are deep, deep in our soul.

If you don't believe me, ask Thomas Jefferson. "We hold these truths to be self-evident. That all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." That's who we are America. But if you don't believe Jefferson, ask Abe Lincoln. "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure." And if you don't believe Jefferson or Lincoln, ask old Emma Lazarus, the poem she wrote, now on the statue of liberty. "Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame, with conquering limbs astride from land to land; here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand a mighty woman with a torch, whose flame is the imprisoned lightning, and her name Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand glows worldwide welcome; her mild eyes command the air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame. 'Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!' cries she with silent lips. 'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!'" There is America. "America. America. God shed his grace on thee. And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea."

I found myself at a loss for words two days before the election in November. Members of our staff said, "You need to say something to your church." The election had not happened. And we didn't really know what the outcome was going to be. But we had all lived through a bitterly divisive campaign. And I really didn't know what to say. I didn't want to appear partisan one side or the other, that's not appropriate and it wouldn't be helpful. And I didn't want to mouth pious platitudes that didn't mean a thing. And I didn't know what to say. And I was walking down the hallway and Neva Rae Fox was in the hallway, and for some reason, I don't know why I looked at Neva and saw my first grade teacher, but I did. And I flashed back to the first grade and I knew what to say. And literally the video that went out to the Episcopal Church, I said Neva take your iPhone out we're just going to film it right here. And that's what we did. And I introduced it, and I said "here's where we must stand as citizens together. From words I learned in the first grade, from Mrs. Sullivan's first grade classroom: 'I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. And to the republic for which it stands, one nation, Under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.'"

That's America. That's who we are. And as we become who we are, we will find a new future. So if you cannot preach like Peter and you cannot pray like Paul, you just tell the love of Jesus, how he died to save us all. There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul. God love you. God bless you. And may God hold us all in the almighty hands of love.

Marie Griffith

Thank you so very very much, Bishop Curry, for that wonderful, very inspiring message. I'd like to invite all of you, we're going to go ahead and move to our reception. You're all very warmly invited to Umrath Hall Lounge, where you can greet Bishop Curry, Bishop Smith, Senator Danforth, our other honored guests. Thank you all so much for being here and we'll see you in a moment in Umrath Hall. Thank you.