

Message on Tuesday, September 16, 2025

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” Romans 12:16

Dear church,

For some time now, people have talked about the “bubbles” most people in our country live in, communities of like-minded people, often defined by political persuasion, world view and their primary source of news. I was reminded of that on Sunday night when I attended the Peace Vigil in the wake of the Charlie Kirk assassination. When you scroll down you will see the prayer I offered at the event. One of the speakers implored the crowd to come out of their bubbles and come together. It’s a good message; it’s the right intention; it’s what we need... and yet I have a feeling that more often than not those community events attract mainly people from one bubble or another. More to the point, the bubble sometimes feels like a bunker. Remember, a bubble can easily burst, but the division in our country and in our local communities seems to be rock solid – at least for now.

I have been invited to a few peace vigils in North Wales over the years and accepted all of them. I was there when we had prayers in the park during the heated “Black Lives Matter” summer of 2020. I offered our sanctuary for another Peace Vigil a couple of years later, initiated by a concerned North Wales resident. And I came to the vigil on Sunday night that was triggered by the lamentable Charlie Kirk assassination. I am not sure how correct my perception is (I could be wrong...) but it feels to me that the crowds in the first two vigils and the crowd at Sunday’s event mostly drew people from different bubbles. Never mind that during all those events speakers, pastors and community leaders celebrated a coming together of the community. “It’s wonderful to see so many people here...” Yes it is! Still, the bubbles persist.

There are a few things that organizers can do to reach across the aisle (like intentionally including people from the other bubble), but that increases the chances of truly coming together only marginally. There are things organizers should avoid if they want to reach across the aisle. In Sunday night’s event a few of the speakers would say something like, “I don’t want to become political here...” - which was a reliable cue to the audience that the person was about to become very political in a partisan way.

It will be the effort of a generation to soften the hard lines drawn between left and right. I hope it will happen, no matter how long it will take. Otherwise, more

violence is almost programmed. And of course, it is always wrong. (I really felt I needed to say that, even though in my mind it should be self-evident.) We have seen too many politically motivated assassinations or assassination attempts in our country. The ongoing division and any stoking of the fires of partisanship are creating a breeding ground for that. We should really try to avoid it. Here is my prayer from Sunday night. Maybe you want to pray it with me...

God of all, God of good and bad, sinner and saint, troubled and liberated, believer and agnostic, we mourn another act of violence, another shooting, another murder. We mourn the erosion of trust in the belief that we can solve problems and differences through dialogue, elections, respectful disagreement, compromise and tolerance.

Be with all who have been harmed, especially the family that Charlie Kirk left behind, his grieving wife and children. Be with all who seek peaceful change and transformation in our country. Be with our public leaders who feel increasingly vulnerable. Bring us, once united but now deeply divided, together again as one nation, one nation that respects the divine image of every human being.

May your spirit reach those on the right and those on the left. May your spirit reach those in the middle and those who don't care. May your spirit reach those who are in despair over the current state of affairs and those who turn their eyes away. May your spirit reach all of us at this hour, in this place - that we may live as ambassadors of peace.

As those who have walked before us in this land, we trust in you and in the possibility of peace despite the violent messages and violent acts that we experience far too often. Have mercy on us, dear Lord! Have mercy on all of us! Have mercy on our country! Bring us together.

Amen.

By the way, Paul's advice in Romans 12 spoke to me. "Be willing to associate with people of low position." As partisanship goes, people will tend to regard the folks on the other side with less than full respect. In a way they are looked at as people "of low position," not literally of course, but still, the vibe can often be felt. To paraphrase what Paul's says here and applying it to this context, he says, "Be willing to associate with people who are not in your (bubble) comfort zone." Can we do it?

Have a most blessed week!
Pastor