



Repairers of the Breach

*Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in. Isaiah 58:12*

I'm thinking of this verse this morning, as I'm thinking about the hatred and pain we have seen on display the past several days, and I'm thinking about Immanuel, and our calling.

I was sickened as I watched the video of George Floyd being killed by a Minneapolis police officer as other officers stood silently by. That officer's actions showed no regard for Mr. Floyd's life, at all. As Christians we would say the officer showed no regard for Mr. Floyd as a precious child of God. We are better than this. We must be better than this. This officer also violated his oath to protect and to serve, and he dishonored scores of faithful, honorable police officers who put their lives on the line, regularly, to serve and protect us all.

So in the protests around the country we see righteous anger. We see anger at centuries-long injustice in our nation and the racism that lessens us all and is deadly and a daily plague for some of our brothers and sisters. *We must be better than this.*

Amidst that righteous anger, though, there is clearly another element, an element driven equally by hate, and bent on destruction. I was also sickened to see St. John's Church in Lafayette Square set on fire by these vandals last night. And I thought again of the words of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I had quoted in the sermon yesterday morning: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." And I thought, *we have to be better than this.*

But I believe Immanuel is called to be a repairer of many breaches, and I see responses to that calling all of the time by our people. I am thinking of all of our Outreach partnerships where, by God's grace, we are working to make a lasting difference for a better world, a world more reflective of God's dream for humanity.

I am thinking this morning of one of our newest outreach partners, the Bishop Walker School for Boys. This school is an outreach mission of our neighboring Diocese of Washington. Patty and I have gone to a couple of their annual supporter dinners, and their mission is inspiring. Their goal is to provide a tuition-free, top-class education to boys from underserved areas of Washington, so that they can become informed, faithful citizens and leaders, drawing upon the school's Christian foundation. I am happy to say our Outreach Committee began this year offering a small grant to the school.

The kind of work this school does is truly a work of repairing the breach and mending our torn social fabric, in God's name. I am so glad we can be a part of it. I want to learn more about their work, and I am hoping to raise up a team from Immanuel to deepen our partnership with them. I am delighted to report that our Senior Warden, Keith June, is already on board. I invite you to visit the School's website to learn more about them: www.bishopwalkerschool.org.

We hosted in a virtual forum yesterday Mr. John Lent, from the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. I was so honored to host John at Immanuel, once again, not only because he is a former parishioner and friend of mine from New York, but because he is so eloquent and passionate as he talks about his faith and the work of this, another outreach partner of ours. He said the humanitarian work of the Diocese of Jerusalem, largely among Palestinians, is centered on three areas: education, healthcare, and peacemaking. He thanked us at Immanuel for being a part of their work, yet another instance of repairing the breach.

This is the way forward, my brothers and sisters, individually, parish-wide, and society-wide. We are called to honor each and all as beloved children of God, asking what God would have us do for their and our healing, repenting when we fall short, and stepping out in faith and partnership with the God who has always gone before us.

These are hard, scary times, make no mistake. Thank God for Immanuel, God With Us, and for each other. Immanuel, by God's grace, has helped change the world for decades. May we engage this breach-repairing ever more clearly. I close with another quote from the Rev. Dr. King:

"I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word."

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy". The script is cursive and somewhat informal.

The Rev. J. Randolph Alexander, Jr.
Rector