



## Diocese of Utah

### OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

75 South 200 East  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

February 2, 2017

Dear People of the Diocese of Utah:

As I have travelled throughout our diocese and like you have watched and read the news and seen posts on various social media outlets, I see there is a common thread of agitation. It has been reported, observed and growing since the election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States.

This agitation is present in people regardless of political leaning. It is common to all. I stress this: it is common to all.

I have had conversations with people of our diocese who report there is dissension within their families and with coworkers that has resulted in the breaking of familial bonds and friendships.

This is deeply troubling and heartbreaking to me. I have been offering many prayers for the people of our diocese. I believe that it is important in these situations to take a deep breath before engaging in conversation with family and friends who do not share your political opinions. As the letter of James says, "You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger..." (James 1:19) If you do not agree with a person try to refrain from any statement that attacks or judges the character of him or her. State your opinions and feelings as your own and that you are not asking the other person to agree with you. And most importantly, that you value and cherish your relationship regardless of your differences.

We have seen, and will continue to see public demonstrations, for and against, actions taken by both our federal and local political leaders.

This is democracy in action. Democracy is often noisy. Our republic, which is the United States of America, needs the engagement of the people to function well. People should never simply acquiesce to whatever decisions our elected leaders make especially if they run counter to our nation's fundamental values of freedom, equality, and justice for all. To do so is

irresponsible. Our elected leaders work for us. It is our tax dollars that support them.

How do we walk together as the body of Christ in the midst of political winds that have divided our nation and reached its fingers into our own individual families?

This is not a new question. It has been with The Church from the very beginning. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to remember that they were the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:27) He instructed them that each member had a place in the body of Christ. He warned them to not boast about human leaders. They did not belong to any human leader, they all belonged to Christ and Christ belongs to God. (1 Corinthians 3:21-23) Christians gather around Jesus Christ. At Communion, Jesus is the host and we are the guests. As such, while individually we may passionately disagree with another, when we come together we are called to be one body. Our unity is found in Jesus Christ.

Beyond our local congregational settings, what is the stance of The Episcopal Church?

The Episcopal Church has passed resolutions through The General Convention that call for gender equality, endorse efforts against gender violence, call for the protection of the environment and to address systemic racial injustice as well as many other social justice concerns.

As The Bishop of The Diocese of Utah, I have taken a vow to defend the faith of our Church and guard its unity. As the Bishop of the Diocese of Utah I take my stand firmly as one who adheres to our Baptismal Covenant that informs, expresses and guides our faith as Episcopalians. Thus, I will seek to serve Christ in all persons regardless of their political opinions, religious affiliation, or ethnic or cultural heritage. I will strive for justice and peace. I will call and witness for the dignity of every human being. This was a mandate you gave me when you called me to be your bishop. I took this to heart. I have been very active in the public square in working for this since being ordained as your bishop and I will continue these efforts and call upon you to do the same.

As a follower of Jesus and the bishop of our diocese I can do no other than this. I thank you for your prayers, support, encouragement as fellow followers of Jesus. Together let us endeavor to keep our congregations, ministries, and families as places of peace and let us work together to shine the light of Christ in all places in our community, state, nation and world.

Faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. Scott B. Hayashi  
Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Utah