

Pastor's Column

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Sign the Peace & Civility Pledge

Since the terrible massacre in Tucson last weekend, the conversation has been non-stop regarding the influence of language, rhetoric, and the use of symbols in possibly creating situations and environments in which hatred and violence can enter.

There has been much in the way of people pointing fingers of blame at each other in terms of their use of language, rhetoric, and symbols.

It is so easy to point a finger and blame someone else! My belief is that we each need to look at our own self, and work to make sure our own language, rhetoric, and use of symbols is peaceful and non-violent.

With that in mind, my personal response to the tragedy in Tucson has been to sign the "Peace and Civility Pledge" that Sojourners is offering and encouraging.

Sojourners, founded in 1971, is a Christian organization seeking to build a movement of spirituality and social change.

Here is the "Peace & Civility Pledge." Please read it and if you are in agreement, I would encourage you to go to their website and sign the pledge as well—www.sojono.net.

The Church can offer a message of hope and reconciliation to a nation that is hurting and deeply divided. We urge those who claim the name of Christ to 'put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.' (Ephesians 4:31-32)

We pledge to God and to each other that we will lead by example in a country where civil discourse and peacemaking are rare. We will work to model a better way in how we treat each other in our many communities, across religious and political lines. We will strive to create safe and sacred spaces for common prayer and community discussion as we come together to seek God's will for our nation and our world.

1. **We believe Jesus' teaching that 'Blessed are those who make peace.'** (Matthew 5:9) **We acknowledge that most of us have been guilty of violence in our hearts and with our tongues. We hold ourselves to the higher standard to which Christ called us: to refrain from not only physical violence but violence of the heart and tongue. 'Do not commit murder. Anyone who murders will be judged for it,' and 'Do not be angry with your brother or sister.'** (Matthew 5:22-23)

2. **We commit that our dialogue with each other will reflect the spirit of the Scriptures, which tell us, in relating to each other, to be 'quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.'** (James 1:19)
3. **We believe that each of us, and our fellow human beings, are created in the image of God. This belief should be reflected in the honor and respect we show to each other, particularly in how we speak. 'With the tongue we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God...this ought not to be so.'** (James 3:9,10)
4. **We pledge that when we disagree, we will do so respectfully, without falsely impugning the other's motives, attacking the other's character, or questioning the other's faith. We will be mindful of our language, being neither arrogant nor boastful in our beliefs as we strive to 'be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.'** (Ephesians 4:2)
5. **We recognize that we cannot function together as citizens of the same community, whether local or national, unless we are mindful of how we treat each other. Each of us must therefore 'put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.'** (Ephesians 4:25)
6. **We commit to pray for our political leaders—those with whom we agree or disagree. 'I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made—for kings and all who are in high positions.'** (1 Timothy 2:1-2)
7. **We believe that it is more difficult to hate others, even adversaries and enemies, when we are praying for them. We commit to pray for each other, those with whom we agree and those with whom we disagree, so that we may be faithful witnesses to our Lord who prayed 'that they may be one. (John 17:22)**

If you are looking for a way to make a personal response to the senseless violence in Tucson this past weekend, go to www.sojono.net and sign the Peace & Civility Pledge!

F. Mike