

Vote, Pray, Love!

Our elder in this Diocese, our senior-most Priest, has gone home to his maker! Rev. Richard Henshaw died on Friday. He was 99. May he Rest in Peace and be Raised in Glory!

Over the past seven months, we figured out at least two things. Recognize we were dealing with a deadly virus and figure out ways to connect. We learned to wash our hands, maintain our physical distance, wear masks like never before, and test and contact trace when necessary. All this because we understood COVID-19 had to be resisted. We did these things out of love for ourselves and our neighbor. Then we reached out to others appropriately. We paid attention to loved ones perhaps like we never have before. We learned to do the online thing, or called, or safely visited loved ones, even if it was to see others through a window, just to stay connected. In short, we have embodied the pithy wisdom behind “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” Only this was not about government, it was about the love, compassion, and generosity of ‘we the people.’ We have witnessed democracy in real-time through this pandemic.

Elections are about our participation in making sure we elect leaders who will help us steward this precious democracy. Leaders before us have sacrificed much to ensure that all citizens of this republic can play their part to elect healthy leaders. This also applies to church, when we prayerfully elect leaders at our 89th historic online Diocesan Convention. To vote is a sacred responsibility. *Let’s vote.*

I also am conscious that we strengthen our praying, meditating, and calming down as spiritual practices going forward. To pray is to acknowledge our connection with one another. This time of isolation has taught us all the art of patient prayer for one another. I am reminded of the classic twin prayer template from Anne Lamott: “Help me, help me, help me, and thank you, thank you, thank you!” We have cried, sobbed, whimpered, moaned or silently stared at nothing for help during this pandemic. We have also grinned, air-hugged, laughed out loud, or silently stared at nothing because we were so grateful! While, for instance, most of us complain about zoom, we are also in awe that we can afford to have this technology that works so well and brings us together. Our church buildings closed down for a while, and we started to lean into prayer, not through anybody, but directly. Isn’t it ironic that we were physically apart when we got spiritually closer? Let’s keep that muscle memory alive. I call us to a day of prayer on the international day of prayer, November 1. We need healing as a nation and as a world. *Let’s keep praying.*

Finally, if this pandemic has revealed anything significant, it has shown us that we had forgotten the main thing. So, what is the main thing? Love. We have forgotten that at the core of our being we are family—a loving community. We are not a divided nation by some political scheme. We are a divided nation because we have forgotten we are a loving nation first. We are a loving nation that has ignored or glossed over some of our past mistakes and allowed others to be less than who we are. There is deep trauma under the surface of our polite “have a nice day” culture that has been exposed by this pandemic. All of us are traumatized. When policies, laws, and cultural norms are revealed as wrapped in lies about who we are, we are traumatized. All of us. The only way forward is to realize that we need each other more than ever before to repair, heal, dream, and thrive! The way forward is to love, to forgive, and to hold no malice against anyone. In the words of Bishop Stephen Charleston, “*Let us do the loving and leave the judging to God!*” All of us can do one or two or three of them. Vote, pray, love!

With affection,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A.L.S.' followed by a large, stylized flourish that extends to the right.

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