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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

September 25, 2001

The Reverend James L. Mayfield
Tarrytown United Methodist Church
Post Office Box 5566
Austin, Texas 78763

Dear Jim:

Thank you for your letter and the copy of your sermon. The horrible tragedies of the terrorist attacks on September 11th have shaken our Country, but I am inspired by the way Americans have responded with acts of courage, generosity, and faith.

I appreciate your prayers and those of our Nation. I am comforted and strengthened by prayer.

Please continue to pray for the families and loved ones of the victims. God bless them all, and God bless America.

Sincerely,


George W. Bush

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September 25, 2001

The Reverend James L. Mayfield
Tarrytown United Methodist Church
Post Office Box 5566
Austin, Texas 78763

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Sincerely,

GEORGE W. BUSH

George W. Bush

GWB/MAH/bws-ws (Corres. #2239292)
(9.mayfield.jl)

PRESIDENT TO SIGN

GWB SIGNATURE/mah

September 24, 2001

Reverend James L. Mayfield
Tarrytown United Methodist Church
Post Office Box 5566
Austin, Texas 78763-5566

Dear Jim:

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Sincerely,

GWB



Tarrytown United Methodist Church

PO Box 5566 Austin, Texas 78763-5566 Phone: 512-472-3111 Fax: 512-476-4301 www.tarrytownumc.org

James L. Mayfield
Senior Pastor

September 17, 2001

Ann Beaty
Associate Pastor
Director of
Spiritual Nurture Ministries

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, DC

Ron Campbell
Associate Pastor
Director of
Evangelism and Missions

re: A personal note
from the Bush family's Austin pastor

Barry Fulton
Associate Pastor
Director of Music
Adult Education

Dear President Bush:

I can only imagine what you have been and are experiencing as the result of what you have seen and what you know. I can only imagine the weight of responsibility that is yours knowing, as you do, that the decisions you are making will set in motion consequences that will ripple across generations for decades to come.

Vicki Aycock
Business Administrator

Libby Beck
Director of Lay Ministries

Olivia Donelson
Director of
Senior Adult Ministries

Diana Henry
Director of
Children's Ministries

Patricia (Trish) Perdue
Director of Youth Ministries

(b)(6)

This is certainly true in Austin. Our congregation participated in four special services between Tuesday and Friday. Each of the three services Sunday morning were full and the third service overflowed (as it did last Christmas Eve when you were with us). And from what I have heard, all the congregations have had similar services and responses.

You, your family and your advisors will continue to be in our prayers. May you be given the gift to discern what God wants you to do, and may God give you inner peace in the midst of turmoil, so that you can be your best self as you carry out your awesome responsibilities.

God bless you.

Grace and peace,

P.S.

Enclosed is a copy of the sermon I preached Sunday (a large portion of which was in the *Austin American Statesman*).

"HOW SHALL WE RESPOND?"

Dr. James L. Mayfield
Tarrytown United Methodist Church
September 16, 2001

Text: Romans 5:1-5

A terrible deed of evil has happened, and it cannot be undone. We have not been watching a movie in which the director and the editor can edit the film and rewrite the script so that last Tuesday's scene of horror is redone as a adventure film.

God only knows how many lives have been taken or how many persons have been physically or emotionally wounded. And the grieving is not limited to the immediate family and friends who those who have been killed. Tidal waves of shock and grief moving with the speed of satellite TV have washed across this land and all the way around this planet. A terrible deed of evil really did happen.

The question before us is: "How shall we respond?"

Certainly, at one level this question has to do with how shall our government respond? This is a very important question, but this is not the question before us who worship here today. Through our elections we have delegated to our President the awesome and terrible responsibility of deciding our government's response. And, now, our part in that, our greatest responsibility in that, is to pray for our President as he deals with this crisis and all the pressures and burdens that come with being President -- pray that he is his best self striving to do what God would have him do even if that means paying a personal political price. He needs our prayers.

But that which we have not delegated and cannot delegate is: "How shall we -- the persons gathered here for worship -- how shall we as individual persons respond?"

Will we allow what has happened to bring out the worst within us? It is tempting. For all my years, stiffness and gray hair, I have not totally outgrown my childish desire to hurt those who have hurt me and to hurt them worse than they hurt me. There is part of me that wants to look Jesus in the eye and in self-righteous anger that's rooted in my pain say: "What do you mean 'turn the other cheek?' Why not take an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth? (Matthew 5:38-39) And, Jesus, while we are on the subject, what is this nonsense about loving our enemies? (Matthew 5:44)"

Revenge, trying to get even, is a most understandable and childlike response. You can see it played out on most playgrounds in elementary schools. Unfortunately, it

is also played out on the not so playful grounds of international relations. So, little wonder it is such a tempting response for us as individuals when we are hurt.

But the goal of getting even is finally an illusion. The true reality of the way the world is, is that revenge begets revenge. Contrast the response of the winning nations after World War I and the response after World War II. After World War I, the goal was to punish Germany and to seek more than a pound of flesh for having started the shooting in World War I. The settlement was so harsh, that it set up Germany to allow Hitler to gain dictatorial control of the country, and we all know where that led. Remember the Holocaust? After World War II, perhaps because we remembered that what we did after World War I did not work, there was a very generous effort from our government to help rebuild the war torn countries, including the countries of those who had been our enemies. It takes no genius to see which was the wiser policy. What is true between nations is also true between persons and groups. Peace is possible only where the cycle of revenge is broken.

When terrible evil has been done, getting even is an illusion. The books of pain are never really balanced. And so, revenge begets revenge. It is only when we stop the cycle of revenge that there is even a hope for peace and reconciliation.

Now, I can just imagine some of you thinking what I was thinking when I got to this point in writing today's sermon. "But what about justice? Shouldn't the criminal be made to pay for the crime? Should not a child learn there are painful consequences for hitting baby sister out of jealousy and stealing toys from a store? And if you are a teacher of a group of students and you do not hold Johnny accountable for throwing his book through the window shattering glass throughout the classroom and harming other students, what is your failure to hold Johnny accountable teaching not only Johnny but also all the others in the class?"

Without justice, love becomes sentimental, naive and finally nothing more than sweet perfume to cover the stink of reality. But justice, true justice, the kind of justice the Scriptures call for, is not the justice of mere revenge. Throughout the Bible, there is story after story about God's acts of justice but the purpose of God's justice is never revenge. The purpose of God's justice is redemption. The intention of God's justice is to bring a healing change to values and behavior of people. God's intention is to bring out the best in his children.

However, when we are hurt by other people, we often experience the childish desire to pay back the pain with interest. But to give in to this desire is not to be our best selves, the persons God has created us to be.

In the first chapter of Genesis we are told that we have been created in the image of God. Our role model for living in the image of God is Jesus. And living in God's image means, among other things, that we deal with injustice and evil in ways similar to Jesus.

To go to the heart of the matter, what was Jesus telling us to do when he told us to love our enemies? As you know, the New Testament was written in Greek, and the Greek word for love that is used in this quotation from Jesus is agape. Agape is not romantic love; that is what the Greek word eros points toward. Nor is it a friendship type of love; that is what the Greek word phila means. Nor is agape the kind of love between family members; the Greek word for that is storge.

Agape is different from these other words in that it is a type of love that has less to do with emotions and more to do with ethics, less to do with feelings and more to do with behavior. Agape has to do with the decision to give of ourselves for the good of the other. Listen again. Agape, the kind of love Jesus was talking about when he told us to love our enemies, is a love that has to do with giving of ourselves for the good of the other. Jesus was not asking us to love our enemies the way we love a sweetheart or a parent or a friend. He was telling us to give of ourselves for the good of the other, regardless of whether or not we feel like it.

And when he said give of ourselves for the good of the other, he was not saying "give in" to the other. Parental love is often agape love; it is not doing what the parent feels like doing. If that were the case, there might not be a next generation. Parental love is doing what is best for the child and what is best for the family. This is why parents discipline their children. They teach there are consequences for wrong and destructive behavior. These consequences are intended to help the child change to more appropriate and constructive behavior. This type of parental love is not fun for the parent; after all, who is really paying the highest price when the teenager is "grounded"? "Grounding" the adolescent, also "grounds" the parent. Nevertheless, the parent gives of himself or herself for the good of the child.

So, how shall we -- we who are in this room this morning -- how shall we respond to what has happened? Of course we must face it and recognize that the horror that has happened is the worst sort of evil. It is appropriate to be angry. In the Bible, especially the Old Testament, we certainly read about the anger of God. And Jesus had his expressions of anger addressed to the religious hypocrites. Anger is appropriate but it is not appropriate for us act childishly, striking out to get even and seeking revenge.

The government, especially our President who is the friend of many in this congregation, has the terrible responsibility of deciding what justice calls for when it is clear who is responsible. But that is not our responsibility. Our responsibility in this situation is for us to be our best selves, not our worst selves. And when we are our best selves, we live giving of ourselves for the good of others. Being our best selves also involves us in doing whatever we are able to do to encourage and enable others to be their best selves. Our giving of ourselves for the good of others and encouraging others to do the same is finally the only way to peace and hope for the world. Wednesday, after the interreligious service on the steps of the State Capital, one of the Muslim men who had helped me plan the worship service told me that Tuesday evening one of his friends, an Arab-American who is a Muslim, was

jogging. A car went by and then stopped. The driver backed up, rolled down his window and verbally attacked this man shouting profanities for his being an Arab and a Muslim. "We Muslims must be mature," my Muslim friend told me. "We Muslims must not react with equal hatred. We must live our compassion. Fear and pain and ignorance caused that man to say what he said; but it hurts. It really hurts." My Muslim friend was, without his realizing it, teaching me what Jesus was teaching us when Jesus said: "Love your enemies."

How shall we -- we gathered here -- how shall we respond to the terror of Tuesday? We do have choices. Our responses do not have to be childish. We do not have to be our worst selves. We can choose to be our best selves. We can choose to try to think and speak and act in the ways Christ has taught us.

In the passage we read today, I think the Apostle Paul was talking about what it is to be our best selves when he told us that because of all we see and know through Jesus Christ, we have access to the amazing grace of God. And when that grace, that love is in us, we are able to do more than merely endure our suffering. We are able to do more than endure because we have hope -- the hope that is rooted in what God has made known in Jesus Christ. This is our hope, and it is our best hope for the world. Let us pray. God, as we deal with the aftermath of the terror and horror of last Tuesday, help us be our best selves and use us to bring out the best in others. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer:

Let us thank God for the gifts and blessings we have received.

We have come here with a variety of concerns and problems. Let us ask God for guidance and help.

God, help us. We are bewildered, confused, angry, and sad, oh so sad. Our hearts break when we think not only of those who were killed but also of those who lived with them and loved them. God, comfort the grieving. Enable them and each of us to face what must be faced and give us the power to move on with our lives. But even in our grief, O God, we are grateful. We are grateful for the strength of the people in this nation and the confidence we have that we will make it through this tragedy. We are grateful for the heroic efforts of so many and the various ways people all across this land have reached out in compassion and generosity.

God, we pray for our President, his advisors and all the officials we have elected -- all those who now must bare on our behalf the terrible burden of discovering just what happened, who is responsible for this cruel attack and how to respond.

God, enable them to be their best selves as they carry out their awesome responsibilities. Protect them from the kind of impatience and anger that would cause them to compound the tragedy by making wrong decisions that will make matters worse on this planet. Enable them to seek and discover what you would have them do. Give them courage to withstand the pressures that would tempt them to act too hastily and with responses that would be as cruel to the innocent as this attack upon us has been. Enable them and each of us to move through our present crisis, living as Jesus was teaching us to live when he taught us to pray: "Our Father...."