



*whenever you are to do a thing tho' it can never be known but to yourself,
ask yourself how you would act were all the world looking at you, & act accordingly.*
Thomas Jefferson, Paris August 19, 1785

To the Members, Friends, Youth, and Children of St. John United Church of Christ:

May you be at peace in your lives this day in the joy and celebration of worship.
We know that there are places where such joy is hard to feel this morning.

I was greeted late Friday night with news and updates from friends and colleagues in Charlottesville, Virginia. A gathering took place for individuals who adhere to the rhetoric of “white nationalism”, under the name “Unite the Right.” On Friday evening, acts of intimidation were reported, including the use of torches, with slogans such as "you will not replace us" and "white lives matter" being heard. This continued on Saturday, with more acts of violence, intimidation, and terror. To put the intent simply: *White supremacist groups came to Charlottesville to intimidate, instigate, and engage in acts of Racism, violence and domestic terrorism.*

As the news continued to come to us on Saturday—with even more acts of hate and injustice—I feel that we must be mindful of the struggle for justice and peace that exist in our society today, and respond as our faith calls us.

I believe this, with my heart and my faith: *There is no place in God's creation for such evil, such hatred, and such bigotry.* There is no place in God's creation for the acts like those witnessed and reported in Charlottesville—acts perpetuated in the name of our nation by individuals who define America on the basis of one's skin color, national origin, or religion. Because of my faith in a still-speaking, radically welcoming God, we must condemn any acts of Racism, violence, and terror unequivocally—for we are one people, one nation, beautifully and diversely made.

I do not believe this on the basis of any political allegiances or party affiliations. I stand by this tenet because of a belief that God has created each person equally, and that we as a nation can see the self-evident truth, in the words of the founders:

*“that all men [sic] are created equal
that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,
that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”*

What was witnessed this weekend was a prolonged act of terror, masked in old dogmas—ideologies that tell that there is someone “better” than another; ideologies that state that one group is more deserving of favor, or power, or influence. These ideologies deny the tenets held in the Declaration of Independence that brought a divided people into one nation, diverse and united since its founding.



You will note the quotations above are from Thomas Jefferson, the third President of our nation, and from the founding documents of which he was a principle author. Jefferson was also the founder of the University of Virginia, and it was around his statute near the Rotunda on the campus that members of the student body gathered this weekend to preserve, protect, and defend the idea that “all...are equal.”

Today, as followers of Christ’s Gospel of love and acceptance, we need to turn our attention to those who are hurting, fearful, and angry because of what has taken place in Charlottesville. The communities made vulnerable because of our nation’s history need to hear from communities like ours. They need to know that there are places like St. John UCC. They need your witness, that people of faith will not stand for acts of Racism and violence. Whether this witness is needed in Charlottesville, or in Freeport, or anywhere else in God’s creation, Christ’s call comes to us, with a reminder of our baptismal covenants “to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice...as best you are able.”

The world is watching us, and it is waiting for our response to act in accord with our covenantal commitments.

Be the Church. Be the extravagantly welcoming, open and affirming, multi-racial and multicultural, uniting Body of Christ that God has called us to be. I pray that you feel called to add your voice, stating what you believe to be true. Live your faith out loud, and speak plainly what you believe. Act accordingly to your convictions, and let our elected leaders know your opinion on what has transpired in Charlottesville—and on what has taken place in recent history to make possible this weekend’s acts of terror.

I am sadly sure that more acts of Racism, violence, and terror will occur in our time. And I am also sure that God has already given us the strength and conviction to stand up—and in the words of the old hymn, to rise up and act our creed:

*Christian, rise and act thy creed; let your prayer be in your deed;
Seek the right, perform the true, raise your work and life anew.*

May God be with us in our worship, in our prayers, and in our actions.

Peace be with you all, and see you soon in Church.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. E. Fairman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "H" and "F".

Rev. Henry E. “Hank” Fairman,
Senior Pastor