

PASTORAL WORD REGARDING THE ELECTION OF
DONALD TRUMP AS THE FORTY FIFTH PRESIDENT
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

On November 8, 2016 a broad swath of the population of this nation, primarily white, and primarily right wing and conservative, that has never stopped fighting the Civil War, coalesced to elect Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States of America. I pray that November 8, 2016 will not be a day that lives forever in infamy because on that day the majority of the voting population, in key electoral states, lowered the standards for the presidency of this country by electing Trump. He is an individual who is a confirmed racist, sexist, tax cheat, abusive businessman, who uses abrasive, insulting and bullying tactics to get his way, and who has two active lawsuits hanging over his head. These words describe who he was when he was elected, and they describe who he is today. A change of title does not change one's character.

As an African American Christian evangelical, as distinct from white evangelicals, who compromised their faith and all semblance of biblical integrity to vote for the 45th president, and whom he loves to usurp for his own purposes, I believe in the possibility, actuality and reality of redemption. 2 Corinthians (as the biblically illiterate 45th president is inclined to say) 5: 17 reminds us, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new." I also believe that a person can grow to the demands of a new office or position and the requirements thereto appertaining. However, decisions involving growth, development and redemption are left up to an individual's choice and free will. Only time will tell whether the forty-fifth president will choose to stand tall like the oak tree or keep company with mushrooms.

Many of those who succumbed to the "Make America Great Again," jargon and drank its propaganda "Kool aide," rather than believing that our greatest days as a country can still be ahead of us were also part of the racist nostalgic melodramatic constituency who whined that they wanted their country back, when the distinguished, articulate, educated, and classy African American gentleman, Barack Obama became the forty-fourth president of the United States. There is a disturbing deeply embedded poisonous strain of racism and sexism in this country that is demonic, deadly and widespread, that flows and churns like molten lava, in the subconscious of many Americans that looks upon African American aspirations and upward mobility as a threat to white privilege and power. Therefore, when African Americans begin to aspire to what

others take for granted as their human and lawful rights and opportunities, those who have enjoyed freedom and access because of birth and ethnicity, start feeling and fearing that something precious has been taken from them.

Whenever I hear the racist “We want our country back” war cry, my first inclination is to ask, “Back from where?” Back from the financial crisis that hung over our heads eight years ago when President Obama took office? Back from the opportunity to be openly racist and blatantly sexist and misogynistic? Back from the myth of separate and equal that was separate in fact, but superior in terms of white privilege in reality? Back from discriminatory housing policies and the suppression of black voting rights? Back from out of control, sky rocketing medical costs that put health insurance out of reach for so many of the nation’s poor? Back from rich peoples’ wars that were poor peoples’ fights? Back from being the most hated and disrespected nation in the world that was partly based upon the image of national leadership? Back from the idolization of the confederate flag, that represents a lost cause, a lost war, and a time of scandalous rebellion and division in our country that almost destroyed this nation? Back from where?

The longitude and latitude of the United States is 37.0902`N, 95.7129`W. That was the longitude and latitude when President Obama took office. That is the longitude and latitude now. The nation has not gone anywhere but forward in terms of stabilizing the economy, health care provision for millions of individuals and families that had heretofore been priced out, integrity of family life in the White House, and more visible presence, diversity and inclusivity in terms of other racial and ethnic groups besides those who have Eurocentric backgrounds.

The election of the 45th president has been disconcerting, discouraging and disheartening to a number of black, brown and other peoples, as well as those whose faith traditions are challenging this nation to think through what it really means by religious freedom. For a number of African Americans, the election of the 45th president is a reminder to some and confirmation to many of how deeply infected this nation is with the cancer of racism and how far it is willing to reach down, go low, and turn backward to protect and defend its pagan deity and idols of white privilege and white superiority. The election of the 45th president represents the refusal of many persons in this nation to accept and understand the reality, contributions and legacy of the African American presence in its midst.

We are hurt. We are stunned. Some of us are bewildered. Some of us are angry. But we are not broken. African Americans are not only here to stay, we are here to stay as equal

partners and participants in the American experiment. We are not some troublesome appendage and recurring problem, or Socratic gadfly to the body politic. We are part of the very foundation and national identity of this country. This country is a unique mixture of both black and white genius and gifts, black and white sacrifices, spirituality and strengths, black and white contributions and culture, as well as other ethnic groups from various hemispheres and regions from across the world. African Americans have fought in every war this nation has been engaged in. We even fought for the right to fight when this nation rejected our offers and then discriminated and persecuted us as we shed our blood on its behalf. We are here to stay as equal partners and participants.

And, we will be free! After all we are survivors. We survived an inhumane and torturous middle passage. We survived a barbarous system of slavery that terrorized us and tried to convince us that we were less than human. We survived the ups and downs, and the twisted and warped political machinations of this country that tried to treat us like lifeless pawns on a chessboard. We survived the violence of white vigilantes and lynch mobs as well as the “appalling silence” and tacit agreement of white respectability that often clothed and comforted itself in pious platitudes of self placating improper biblical exegesis. Last hired and first fired, we were told to make bricks without straw and then given lectures about lifting ourselves up by our own bootstraps when every attempt was made to block our access to both the boots and the straps. We not only survived but we have even thrived.

When one considers our history of survival and thriving, the spit ball that was hurled at us in the choice of the 45th president is only a blip on the radar screen in our long history and legacy of being bullied but still having breakthroughs and of being attacked and still achieving. When one considers the history of this nation and the state of the world, the election of this 45th president has the potential of being the worst possible choice for such a time as this. However, we are not afraid not only because we are survivors and thrivers; we are a spiritual people and if we are clear about anything it is that we know whose we are and who ultimately holds our destinies---now, henceforth and forevermore. We are a people who have come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord and we have learned how to pray and say the immortal words of James Weldon Johnson,

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;

Thou who has by Thy might,
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.

In Jesus mighty and matchless name do we pray. Hallelujah! Amen

William D. Watley
November 11, 2016