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Saint George's Episcopal Church, Arlington, Virginia  
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**“Post-Election 2016: Filling in the Blanks with Good Things”**

***“...When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified...Nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...This will give you an opportunity to testify...So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you the words and wisdom that none of you opponents can withstand or contradict...By your endurance you will gain your souls. Luke 21: 5-19***

**We are living in extraordinarily stressful times. The anxiety level in our country is at a fever pitch. We are living and breathing it.**

**We are witnessing protests, riots, social media wars and all kinds of discord between people of opposing political views.**

**We had hoped that all of the vitriole of the campaign would be over after the election, but that is not the case. And many are alternately despairing, cynical and fearful about what our future holds.**

**Jesus doesn't mince words in today's Gospel. “You will hear of wars and insurrections. Nation will rise up against nation and kingdom against kingdom.” Bad things will happen. It's inescapable. But how we are in relation to those happenings**

**makes all the difference in the world. As Jesus' followers stand admiring the great temple, he tells them that the day will come when not one stone will be left standing on another. In other words, your security does not rest on what can be seen. Your security rests in God alone. As you deal with the inevitable chaos of the world, Jesus says, I will be your rock and stronghold. "Do not be terrified." I will give you words to speak. I will give you wisdom about when not to speak, if you will listen. I will give you the peace that passes all understanding. When the very foundation of life as we know it seems to be cracking, we know that we will not fall through. God is holding us as we navigate our way forward.**

**Times of transition are by their very nature anxious times. And it is vitally, essentially, fundamentally important that we do our utmost to stay centered, calm and hopeful. For our own well-being, for the sake of our country and for the world. Right now we are in a "wait and see" time. And we human beings have a definite tendency to fill in the blanks with negative things during times of uncertainty. As Christians, as Episcopalians, as Saint**

**Georgians, we need to actively work to fill in the blanks with positive things. As we go forward into the future, we will continue to work for the common good, grounded in our identity as followers of Christ. Jesus came to bring God's kingdom to all people- a kingdom of justice, peace and love. We therefore will continue to work for justice and peace. Jesus had a particular focus on the outcast, the poor and the oppressed. We therefore will continue to stand with those who are marginalized- immigrants, people of color, people of other religions, our LGBTQ brothers and sisters.**

**One of the very important outcomes of this election is that we now know how marginalized people feel who have been negatively impacted by globalism. People who feel utterly ignored and forgotten. People who had good manufacturing jobs that have gone away, people for whom the economy is not working, people who need a bridge to the future. So, we are called to work for justice for them too. In our baptismal covenant we vow to "respect the dignity of every human being."**

**There are many people who feel they have lost their dignity, so seeking to understand their perspective is really important.**

**Truly listening with an open heart and mind is the very hardest thing to do, but that is the key to healing the deep fractures in our common life. And we don't have to look too far to find people who have a different perspective. Many of us need look no further than across the table at Thanksgiving. Our goal in our families, in our workplaces, in our church, wherever we may be, is to do our best to stay connected to people who are different from us while also being clear about where we stand. This is what it means to live out our biblical mandate to "speak the truth in love." When we let others challenge us and we do our best to stay connected to them, the world is changed step by step. This I think is what Jesus meant when he told his followers not to worry about things that would happen in the future. He told them that the chaos of the world would give them an opportunity to testify. When we are calm, connected and clear, working for the life of the world, we are testifying to God's power. We human beings are not capable of this on our own. It**

**is Jesus himself, God's very Word working within us that speaks truth to power and gives us the courage we need.**

**Anxiety is real. Fear is real. Uncertainty is real. But how we deal with these realities makes all the difference. We deal with these dark forces by bringing them up into the light, naming them and asking them what they have to teach us. And what they have to teach us may surprise us.**

**Today we are gathered in Jesus' name and that is a powerful thing. We come together to practice how to be community so that we can leave today to create community beyond our walls. To work with people who are like-minded and to work to find common ground with people who are really different from us. We do that with the sacrificial love of Christ. Jesus was very clear about the call on his life and he always did everything in his power to connect with others and help them to reach beyond self-interest to claim their citizenship in God's kingdom-a kingdom of justice, peace and love, a kingdom that has no borders.**

**Today in the Prayers of the People, we will pray for our common life, asking God to help us work together with forbearance and mutual respect. And we'll pray for our President Barak and our President-elect Donald during this time of transition. And we ask God to heal us so that we can work to heal the deep wounds of others. Today we go forward to love others with the sacrificial love of Jesus, the kind of love that costs us something.**