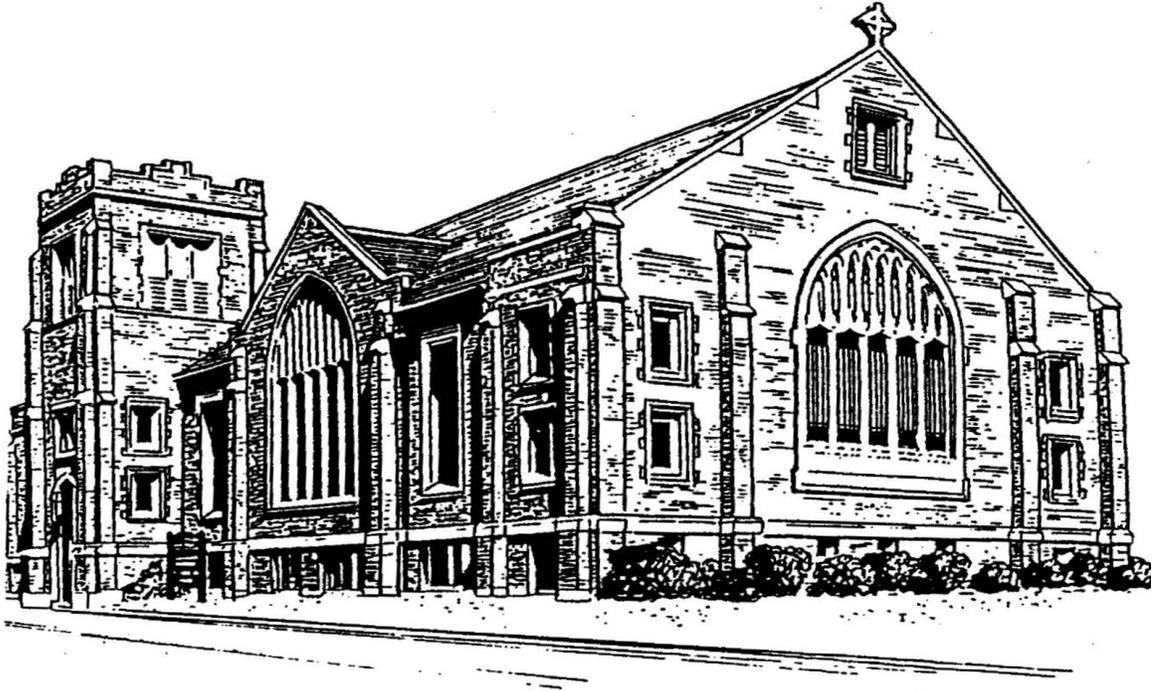


## HAMDEN PLAINS UMC



Dear Hamden Plains Church community,

In this historic time of national crisis, I would be remiss if I did not address yesterday's violence at the United States Capitol. These remarks are not intended to be comprehensive, but they are intended to be timely.

Christians decry violence in all its forms: physical, psychological and emotional. The violence perpetrated yesterday was part of the "shadow side" (see Carl Jung) of our American narrative. African enslavement, Native American forced relocation, exploitation of child labor, and a national civil war are but a brief list of the violence we perpetrate against ourselves. This is not to condone the insurrectionists who stormed the United States Capitol yesterday and threatened the safety of our lawmakers at the instigation of the President of the United States,

but it is to say that we are naive if we say this was “unAmerican.” Sadly, it is “too American.” The beating with a cane of abolitionist Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner by pro-slavery Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina in 1856, and the shooting of the U.S. Capitol by Puerto Rican nationalists in 1954, are only two examples of overt violence in the halls of Congress.

Yesterday’s events will be parsed again and again by pundits and security professionals. It is clear that, in contrast to the security preparations made for the “Black Lives Matter” protests of this past summer, the security preparations for this so-called “Save our Democracy” event were significantly less. It is my opinion that this is directly related to the color of the skin of the protesters. America’s “original sin” remains alive and well.

Those among the protesters, the recently pardoned federal convict Roger Stone among them, who invoked the name of Jesus in this domestic terror event, do not speak for me as a Christian and are, in fact, antithetical to the ministry of Jesus as described in the Gospels.

The question always hangs in the air, “*What can we do?*” The knee-jerk reaction is “pray,” and I do believe that prayer changes things: mostly us. The monastic communities invite us to “*ora et labora:*” “pray and work.” So, yes, we should pray: for our nation, for hardened hearts, for ourselves, for those killed in the assault, for the police and security who stood in harm’s way. We should pray.

We should also work. The work we are called to do in this time is to tell the truth. The truth is that this Presidential election was not stolen, nor was it won by President Trump. The continued lies in this regard tear at any efforts at reconciliation and at the fabric of our democracy. The sooner liars stop lying, the sooner we can get on with the work of nation-building and of governance. The Bible is clear to say “*The truth shall set you free*” (John 8:32) and it is equally clear that “truth” is the foundation of a sustainable democratic republic.

In addition to truth-telling, we need to find ways to get involved in governance and in conversation with those who differ in their opinions. I practice this regularly and

invite you to do the same, to the degree you have the bandwidth to do so. We all have different capacities, but we all can do something, writing, speaking and acting among them.

Thank you for reading, for praying, for working and for acting. Despite our propensity to say “God bless America,” the reality is that God has **already** blessed America. May we as Americans start acting like it.

Yours in Christ’s service,

***Pastor Brian Bodt***

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