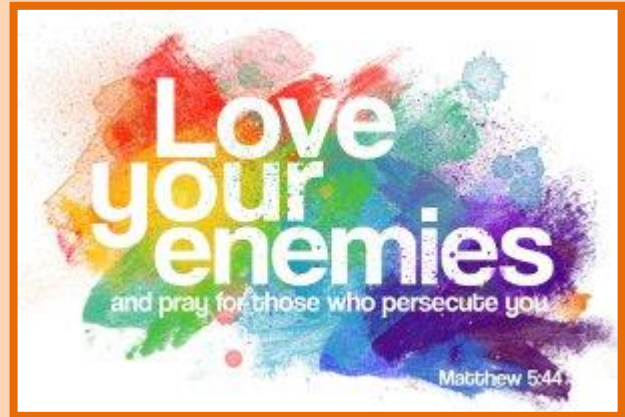


FIRST AND CENTER
Pastor's Blog
January 24, 2018



“Why are we praying for the President every Sunday in worship?” A couple of people have questioned me on this, since this President seems to speak and act in ways antithetical to so much that we value and believe here at Center Church. Why would we pray for such a man?

Well, first of all because Jesus said, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Jesus understood that prayer is not just asking God to help people you love or like, but that prayer is much more powerful than that. We pray to God for those we struggle to love or like or respect, those who hurt us and others, not because we approve of them, but because we want God to intervene in their lives in a powerful way to bring them to a place of health and goodness. We pray for eyes to be opened, hearts softened, minds expanded, lives changed. Actually, we probably all should spend more time in prayer for those we might label “enemies” or even those we just don’t understand or can’t love. Not only do they need our prayers, but *we need to pray like that*. Our eyes open, hearts soften, minds expand, and lives change as we challenge ourselves to love as God loves. This is not a syrupy, Valentine’s card kind of love, but a muscular, powerful love that moves mountains, according to I Corinthians 13.

It is too light a thing to ask God only for help for good people. As Jesus said, the physician comes to treat those who are sick, not those who are well, and the context indicates he did not mean physical illness. I challenge all of us to be more vigorous in these times in our prayer life, and pay special attention to Jesus’ call to us to pray for our enemies and those who persecute us. Who knows what power may be unleashed by our spirits joining together to blow a new wind into the world?

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Pastor