
How Do We Respond?

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Canon Wallace Marsh**

It has been a difficult few weeks. We have seen horrible acts of violence. We have watched endless news cycles about the importance of black and blue lives. We have seen tensions play out across our nation, even in this neighborhood. Many of us are asking: How do we respond?

Our Sunday gospel passages have offered ways to respond both individually and as a Christian community.

A few weeks ago, we heard the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), who had compassion on the stranger lying on the side of the road. At some point, you have experienced the compassion of a Good Samaritan. It is likely that experience of compassion was a defining spiritual moment in your life.

Compassion draws up closer to God. We know this because scripture tells us of God's compassion and mercy: "God is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger and of great kindness" (Psalm 86:15, 103:8, and 145:8). God is full of compassion and we see this in the person of Jesus Christ, who extends compassion throughout his ministry.

Jesus Christ and the Good Samaritan extend compassion to those on the "other side of the road." As Christians, Jesus calls us to "go and do likewise." Practicing compassion to our neighbors might be one of the most effective ways to move the needle of progress forward. So, be intentional about practicing compassion at home, work, and in our social circles.

Now, how should Christian communities respond?

The Cathedral has three words that Dean Sam Candler continually emphasizes—grace, excellence, and hospitality. These words play out in the story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42). In short, Martha prioritizes excellence and hospitality, while Mary emphasizes grace. Jesus gets into the middle of their argument because Jesus to emphasize the importance of all three: grace, excellence, and hospitality.

Communities that emphasize grace, excellence, and hospitality have been agents of change. For example, the apostles used these values to create koinonia, holy community (Acts 2: 43-47). Martin Luther King, Jr. used these to cast a vision for "beloved community." One could say that Dietrich Bonhoeffer challenged the German Church to embrace these values in the face of Nazi Germany, eventually planting a church based upon grace, excellence, and hospitality. These values create a holy community that can change the world around us.

So, here are two ways to respond: 1. Practice compassion, and 2. create communities of grace, excellence, and hospitality.

The Cathedral of St. Philip strives to be a community of grace, excellence, and hospitality. We invite you to participate in this community, to help us spread these values to Atlanta and the world.