

Appendix G

Request from the Rev. Dr. Jim Black

APPENDIX G

2016 Winter Stated Meeting - Presbytery of St. Augustine

Overture to the Presbytery of St. Augustine from Teaching Elder James R. Black

Sisters and Brothers:

As a presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we are concerned about the rising volume of vitriolic rhetoric coming from politicians, celebrities, business leaders, and citizens. It seems that some of this rhetoric promotes ignorance and intolerance. It reveals ungodliness when either the promotion of fear or pride goes beyond appropriate social boundaries. When fears are played upon or pride is over-promoted by any group at the expense of others, greater dangers are set into motion. Such speech can become a platform for self-promotion and political pandering. This kind of atmosphere increases the possibility for more violence and injustice and sets up reactions that can be even more unlovely. We are concerned when any group of people is labeled and become objects rather than persons made in the image of God. Rising hate crimes against any religious or ethnic group is against both the better character of our country as well as the faith many profess in the sovereign character of God. Such actions increase the likelihood of less safety for all of us and may only increase the cycles of vindictive violence.

As Christians, conscience dictates that we must speak out against such divisive behavior. We cannot allow faith to be overcome by fear. We cannot ignore the plight of peaceful neighbors who are attacked because of a perceived threat or fear.

In accordance with the principles expressed in the Theological Declaration of Barmen, we reject any ideology that promotes the value of one human being over another. We reject any ideology that suggests that any person or political party is lord of our life or conscience.

As Christians, we long for the Prince of Peace to reign even more on earth as He does in heaven. Until that day, we have work to do. As God calls us to love and honor our neighbor, we shall try to do so through our words and deeds. We will attempt to serve and care for all our neighbors.

Jim Black, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

Sursum corda!