



One Together

August 2021



Finding Healing in Recovering Our Past

At a ceremony this week in King George, the Rev. Lee Gandiya, rector of St. Paul's, King George blessed recovered gravestones that had been sold for scrap in the 1960's. The gravestones were discarded when Columbia Harmony Cemetery, an historic African American cemetery of 37,000 individuals, was moved to build a metro station. St. Paul's parishioners Senator Richard and Mrs. Lisa Stuart recently discovered the stones on their property and are helping to relocate them to a memorial in a Maryland cemetery.

"This was our way of restoring that which had been denied to so many families," said Father Gandiya. "... the ability to identify and show love in a tangible way...the ability to recognize and relate to their ancestors...the ability to find important lessons and experiences they wanted us to find and know...the ability to find out that they ever lived and belonged here... and finally that this was their home...their life."

The event was covered this week in newspapers throughout Virginia. Read the [full story](#).

Brothers & Sisters in Christ.

The recent events in Afghanistan shocked many around the world but were not a complete surprise to those of us who served there. The original mission to Afghanistan was to find al-Qaeda following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The Taliban regime collapsed in 2001 and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) stayed on to oversee the transition to a new government and provide security. By the time, I deployed to Helmand province in 2006, the mission had morphed into a full-blown nation-building exercise under the most challenging conditions. Our arrival provoked a violent response from the Taliban. The rest is history...

I deployed again in 2012 following numerous operations to stabilize the situation and it was clear then as it is now that the long-term solution to Afghanistan's problems lies within the country. Yes, genuine efforts were made to transfer responsibility to Afghans (President Karzai and others) but those efforts did not include the Taliban. There were no incentives to bring the Taliban to the table - for example, the poppy fields continued to provide the Taliban with a steady income. So, with the Taliban still active and financially viable the outcome was sadly predictable.

Today, my heart grieves for the fallen, their families and friends, the wounded, civilians, refugees, and indeed for Afghanistan itself. "They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning. We will remember them. We will remember them." (For the Fallen, Laurence Binyon)

Moving forward, let us work alongside whatever government emerges out of Afghanistan. It is very clear that the Taliban will do everything to avoid being exiled again and they will soon realize that governing is different from warfighting. To that end, we should lean on our British friends whose experience in regime transitions is second to none, evidenced by the many peaceful regime transitions to British Commonwealth Countries. One of the most amazing stories of cooperation even in warfare comes from the trenches of World War I. During the Christmas truce of 1914, not only did 100,00 British and German soldiers unofficially stop fighting, but in some places in Belgium, German soldiers and British soldiers met in No man's Land, singing Christmas carols, and exchanged gifts, food, souvenirs, and even engaged in short, casual football games. There are many other examples of this from Cyprus, Kosovo, Iraq, and now Afghanistan.

I accept that we should do everything in our power to protect our partners, but we should take great care lest we undermine any future efforts to build peace and stability in the region. Our loyalties to those who supported our war efforts should not blind us to the long-term human security needs of Afghanistan, the international community, and the USA. I fear that airlifting Afghanistan's best and brightest *en masse* could undermine Afghanistan's future prospects, peace, and stability in the region. Perhaps our partners and Afghanistan itself would be better served if we were to stay put and help the international community oversee the transition to a new regime and provide security. The human cost alone demands that we stay the course for Afghanistan and for our own war dead: U.S Service members through April: 2448; U.S. Contractors: 3,846; Afghan national military and police: 66,000; Coalition partners from NATO member states: 1,144; Afghan civilians: 47,245; Local fighters 51,191; Aid workers: 444 and Journalists: 72 (AP Aug 17, 2021) and still counting.

Finally, in memory of those who died, may we be better people, and in gratitude to God, may we live as those who are not their own but who are bought with a price. **Amen.**

Peace.

Lee Gandiya
Rector

Heavy Hearts for Haiti

The 7.2 magnitude earthquake that struck on August 14th, followed immediately by Tropical Storm Grace, has again focused our attention on the country of Haiti. This latest natural disaster comes when Haiti is already facing the pandemic, economic instability and civil unrest.

Haiti's multiple calamities continue to challenge our faith and our humanity....

[Click here to read the full update from Fr. Constant.](#)

Good News to Share

The cottage repairs are finished and it has been rented. (We still have a little yard work to do when the weather permits to fill and grade the side yard for better drainage)
Thanks to all who helped with this project.

Upcoming Events

Please watch the church announcements for celebrating " National Back to Church Sunday" on September 19.

An Invite for Scouting



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When: Tuesday Nights, 7:00-8:00 PM
Where: Dahlgren United Methodist
Church - 17142 State Rte 668

Got Questions? – Contact
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people at all times; to keep myself physically strong,
mentally awake, and
morally straight.

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