

**Let's Go Deeper...**  
**Wednesday, January 25, 2017**  
**David Shirey**



The Revs. Scott Johnston and Patrick O'Connor

Pastors Elizabeth and Jimmy can attest to the fact that preparing a Pastoral Prayer for Sunday morning requires prayerful preparation all week. We pray over what to pray. Last week, I got to Friday with five pages of ponderings, phrases, Scriptures and hymn lyrics, but before I sat down on Saturday morning to prayerfully weave them into a prayer, another prayer was brought to my attention that I prayed on Sunday morning.

The full text of the news feed from which I adapted my introductory remarks last Sunday and which follow may be viewed at:

<http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/19/opinions/we-prayed-with-donald-trump-johnston-oconnor/>

The prayer was written by the Revs. Scott Black Johnston of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in Manhattan and The Rev. Patrick H. O'Connor of First Presbyterian Church in Jamaica, Queens. Rev. Johnson is white. Rev. O'Connor is black. They are the pastors of two New York churches with unique connections to President Donald Trump.

Rev. O'Connor's church in Queens, is where the President's mother, an immigrant from Scotland, was a member, and where he was baptized and confirmed. When he took the oath of office, he rested his hand on the Lincoln Bible and on the Bible given to him by the church when he was 8 years old. The church is 354 years old -- older than the nation itself. Once it was full of Scottish immigrants dreaming the dream. Now it is packed with African-Americans, and Afro-Caribbean, African and Latino immigrants, all dreaming the same dream, and hoping for opportunity, fairness and justice in this land

Rev. Johnston's church in Manhattan stands closer to Trump Tower than any church in the city. Sitting in his office, Mr. Trump has a direct view of the Celtic cross atop the church's spire. It sits on the most expensive retail corridor in the world and has offered year-round shelter and services to the homeless of the neighborhood for more than 30 years.

In early December, the two men offered to pray for and speak with the then President-elect. He accepted. Last Wednesday afternoon they met with him, spoke to him, and offered the prayer I prayed—*we* prayed-- on Sunday.

Before they prayed they explained they pastor "purple churches" -- congregations that are economically, racially and politically diverse, strong in faith, active in community. They said, "We want a government that helps to further this important work" and they said "We hope, Mr. Trump, as you begin to lead this country, that you and your administration will listen to a diversity of Christians, and a diversity of leaders from other faiths, too. Local churches (and synagogues and mosques) are on the front lines as our nation seeks to address its most pressing issues: racism, homelessness, immigration, health care, economic opportunity and opiate addiction."

They ended their visit in prayer, a prayer to which they say Mr. Trump said, "Amen."

***The prayer:***

*Almighty God, all the people of the earth are yours. We are all your children.*

*Your will is done when governments are rightly administered, liberty is preserved, justice is decreed, dignity is assured, and care is extended to the most vulnerable of your children.*

*This day, we ask that you would look with favor on President-elect Donald J. Trump. Protect him and keep his family safe. Grant to him equal doses of courage and humility. Guide him as he makes countless decisions. Give him wisdom and mercy. Enable him to find the right words: good words, true words, healing words.*

*Our country's differences and divisions are vast. Deliver us, loving God, from rancor and cynicism. Forgive our sins. Encourage us to kindness. Teach us to mend the tattered places in this society. Give us hope and holy perspective for the living of these days.*

*Tender Creator, in some ways -- important ways -- we all want the same things. We want opportunity. We want fairness from our government. We want safety. We want order. We want clean water and fresh air. We want to come home at night, feeling like we are making progress, like we are part of something bigger than ourselves, like we matter. We all want to matter.*

*Give to us all, O Lord, in this time, common purpose and an uncommon commitment to this great country. Help us to work together to achieve a more perfect union -- a nation that is more than the sum of its parts.*

*Mold the President-elect into your servant. Help him to lead us in pursuing your extraordinary vision.*

*This we pray in the name of the one who calls all people to reconciling and redemptive work, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*