

Prof. Stephanie Paulsell: Good morning.

Congregation: Morning.

Prof. Paulsell: Would you stand for our responsive reading, number 17 in the black Appleton psalter in your pew.

Prof. Paulsell: Hear a just cause, oh Lord. Attend to my cry. Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit.

Congregation: From thee let my vindication come. Let thy eyes see right.

Prof. Paulsell: If thou triest my heart, if thou visitest me by night, if thou testest me, thou wilt find no wickedness in me. My mouth does not transgress.

Congregation: With regard to the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have avoided the ways of the violent.

Prof. Paulsell: My steps have held fast to thy paths. My feet have not slipped.

Congregation: I call upon thee, for thou wilt answer me, oh God. Incline thy ear to me. Hear my words.

Prof. Paulsell: Wondrously show thy steadfast love, oh Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at thy right hand.

Congregation: Keep me as the apple of your eye. Hide me in the shadow of thy wings.

Prof. Paulsell: From the wicked who despoil me, my deadly enemies who surround me.

Choir: (singing)

Dean David Hempton: Good morning, everyone. Reading is from the Hebrew Bible Book of Proverbs, chapter 12 beginning of verse 14 to reading about speech and wisdom.

Dean Hempton: From the foot of their lips, a person is filled with good things as surely as a work of their hands rewards them. The way of a fool seems right to themselves, but a wise person listens to advice. A fool shows their annoyance at once, but a prudent person overlooks an insult. A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies. Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Dean Hempton: So the theme of today is anniversaries. As a historian, I have a natural interest in anniversaries. I'm a sucker for them. Made more acute this summer by the celebration of my own 40th wedding anniversary. Wow, we were 10. This has been a vintage summer for anniversaries. We've had the 50th anniversary of

Woodstock, the moon landing, and two other anniversaries got my attention this summer.

Dean Hempton: The first was the 200th anniversary of what came to be known as the Peterloo massacre in Manchester in England when 18 people were killed when the Lancashire Yeomanry were sent in to arrest a radical orator named Henry Hunt at a giant political rally in the world's first industrial city. Unaccustomed to dealing with large crowds and spooked by the radical implications of Hunt's oratory, they lost their discipline and ended up killing many innocent bystanders.

Dean Hempton: Another anniversary, far more costly in terms of human life and far more important to me personally, was the 50th anniversary this summer of the outbreak of the troubles in Northern Ireland. Began in 1969, which over a period of 30 years cost almost 4,000 lives. I was a young teenager living in Belfast when the troubles broke out in 1969, and a year later I entered the local university and had my student years dominated by sectarianism and violence.

Dean Hempton: In the many TV and radio programs dedicated to remembering the troubles broadcast last month in Ireland, a few things stood out to me. The first is the oppressive social structures, hyper partisanship, mutually incompatible aspirations and violent rhetoric preceded the outbreak of violence. Speech of that preceded the violence. When violence did break out the early decision making and actions by leaders of all kinds turned out to be deeply flawed and only contributed to the breakdown that followed. The second thing that stood out in the many interviews with political, ecclesiastical, and paramilitary leaders is a sense of utter futility and regret that people expressed. What on earth had it all been about, and was it worth the deaths of so many people? What was really accomplished by violence that could not have been accomplished in other ways? What was striking to me was not only how many people died but also how many more lives were just ruined forever. There was a story of a Protestant paramilitary leader who shot his Catholic workmate in the back of the head and could never forgive himself for his own callous violence. In prison and out, he tried to rehabilitate only to take his own life in an act of unresolved guilt and anguish.

Dean Hempton: Another incident involved the murder of Lord Mountbatten in County Sligo. There could be no more perfect representative of British imperialism than Mountbatten, who was the last British viceroy of India, so he was an obvious target for the Irish Republican Army. He was murdered by blowing up his boat, but many others, including children, died in the blast. There's nothing more heartbreaking than watching the angst, anguish, and tears of a bereaved mother talking about the senseless murder of her beloved child as collateral.

Dean Hempton: So what is the point of anniversaries and the remembering? Aren't some things best forgotten? In some ways, yes, but I can't help thinking that the kind of

hyper-partisanship and irresponsible oratory that leads to violence is not too far from our own doors in this country.

Dean Hempton: What are we going to do about it? Looking back, I wish that leaders of all kinds in Ireland had done a better job trying to understand the motivations of those they regarded as their enemies. Everyone from politicians to journalists, from church leaders to university professors and students could have taken more responsibility for what was happening around them, but we didn't. The problem seemed intractable, the sides too divided, their aspirations too incompatible. Does that sound familiar? Trying hard to understand the lies and motivations of people whose views and aspirations are completely antithetical to mine became a vital part of my own intellectual and moral education. That often meant sitting in meetings or across dining table conversations as a student where I felt deeply uncomfortable about what was being said around me. Sometimes I was right to be uncomfortable, but sometimes I was uncomfortable because I was different, insecure, and felt threatened or outraged by what was being said. All this was messy and difficult, made worse by the daily litany of violence which pushed almost everyone to extremes. But I did learn in this environment, however imperfectly, to engage with diversity of culture, religion, opinion, aspiration, and identity. It was the single most important lesson I learned at college.

Dean Hempton: No two situations are ever the same, but I will say that the level of partisanship on display in the United States and the inability of many of us to listen to contrary views is very disturbing. Now please don't misunderstand this. I'm not making a plea for casual acceptance of views that should properly disturb us, whether Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, white supremacists, misogynous, homophobic, or whatever, but it is a plea for difficult and vital conversations across differences including ideological, religious, and political differences. It just cannot happen at a university whose proper function is the evaluation of ideas and no consequences, then where? If not among us, then who? If not now, then when? These are urgent questions. Retiring to our comfort zones of ideological conformity is simply not an option.

Prof. Paulsell: Would you pray with me? Oh, God, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth. Bless our work this day. Let everything we read and write, everything we number and interpret, everything we think and say and do this day. Teach us to love the world you have made and inspire us to contribute to its good. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.

Prof. Paulsell: I invite you to join me in praying the Lord's Prayer, which is found on the back of your order of worship.

Prof. Paulsell: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead

us not temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Lector: Please rise as you are able and join us in the hymn number 23, verses one and three. Verses one and three of Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee.

Congregation: (singing)

Lector: Dean Hampton, we thank you for that challenging and powerful word, and now may the movement of God's spirit enlighten us, transform us, and lead us into life. More life. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.