

Vestry Meeting June 26, 2019

Discernment about the Placement of the U. S. of America Flag

18 folks present indicated the interest in discerning about Option A first. Several other options received 2-3 indications of interest as the initial item for discernment.

Option A The American flag and the Episcopal flag would be in the sanctuary in one of several designated locations at all times, meaning to show respect and self-restraint both for those who wish it present, and those who prefer its absence.

First Discernment Move- After prayer, all members of the group identifies all possible reasons that option A might limit our mission and service in the kingdom of God

- Not a positive experience in the military – flag serves as a negative reminder
- People from other countries in our parish family may be unhappy they only see the U.S. of America flag.
- The flag will send a confusing message.
- The focus should be on Christ – not the flag.
- Framed as an ‘all or nothing’ issue it can distract.
- In the front it detracts from God.
- Exclusive – makes some folks feel ‘other.’
- Episcopal Church is broader (global) than USA.
- This decision establishes a precedent, could be a negative one?
- In a charged political climate, it may be seen as divisive political statement, like we are trying to take sides.
- The church is a symbol of faith, not a human symbol.
- Flag may be a barrier reaching out to unchurched youth.
- Possible logistic issues

Second Discernment Move-After prayer, every member of the group identifies all possible reasons to favor Option A as a way to help us in our mission and serve as part of the kingdom of God-

- Reasonable compromise that recognizes both sides.
- Faith showing concern for government – “In God We Trust.”
- Some feel represented as an American.
- There is a spiritual significance of the flag for some regarding sacrifice made by themselves or others.
- The flag represents the foundation of our lives – what it means to be an American.
- It is symbol of the freedom of religion.
- The flag can represent what the church is and it can represent who we are, in a good way.
- Military plays an important role in the community, and part of our role may be to reach out to military-connected persons.
- Unity.
- Opportunity to model positive appropriation of symbols others may use negatively – we can claim appropriate use.
- For some seeing the flag conveys comfort – a sense of belonging.
- Symbol of the Bill of Rights – our place and what we stand for
- The flag is part of why we can sit here.
- Symbol of respect – what the flag stands for.
- Demonstrates that we need to remember those who sacrificed.
- Having the flag in the sanctuary gives the lie to divorcing faith and the public sphere, it shows our responsibility to bear witness to the world of politics as positive Christians.
- A sign of Healing – that we are in a new place as a church.

After further prayer, discernment- 25 yes, 9 no discernments,
1 abstention.

Discussion, then Vote by the Vestry

I so move that the American flag and the Episcopal flag will be in the sanctuary in one of several designated locations at all times, meaning to show respect and self-restraint both for those who wish it present, and those who prefer its absence.

Motion by Candace Davis, second by Chanca Morrell Yes 6
Abstain 1