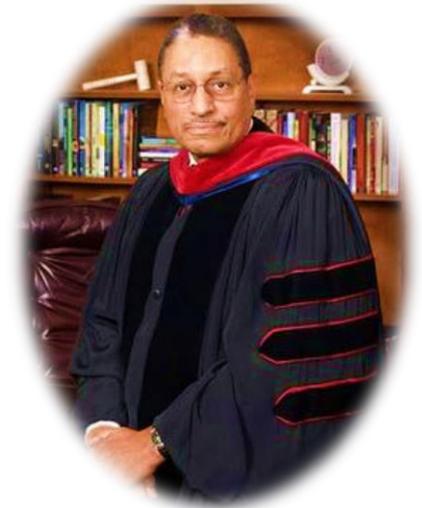


The Pastor's Pen

October 8, 2017

Wallace Charles Smith, D.Min.
Senior Minister



The massacre in Las Vegas again raised the immorality of gun culture in this nation that fuels violence at every juncture. There is absolutely no reason to personally own automatic weapons. No one hunts deer with an automatic rifle. Although the Second Amendment protects people's rights to keep and bear arms, it is time people of faith mounted a hue and cry against the National Rifle Association and all those who tolerate massacres at the cost of protecting the right to bear arms.

Let me thank all those who participated in last Saturday's planning session. The enthusiasm has been extraordinary! Reverend Price took us through a very comprehensive methodology for translating our vision, *To be the Voice of Justice for the Black Church in America*, and our 2017-2018 theme of *Understanding Justice through the Lens of Jesus* into practical program initiatives. Many thanks to Nico Gittings Critcher, our Church Administrator for establishing the infrastructure support, such as the website for questions and answers, www.visionshilohbaptist.org, and the overall framework for the follow up planning going forward. There is a great spirit at our church as we proceed in this new church year, we know that God is directing us to higher and higher heights.

At the planning meeting I asked, "*Why is our country's response to the humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico a justice issue?*" The answer is informative for our work toward the five-year vision. The attack on the mayor of San Juan, the blaming of Puerto Ricans for their debt crisis and challenged infrastructure are clear indications of injustice in the perceptions of key leaders. Blaming victims for their victimization is always an injustice. No one blamed Texas or Florida for their storm-related tragedies. Why is it that people of color suffer that indignity? The answer is, because unequal treatment is in the DNA of the ruling class. It can only be dealt with by calling people out for their prejudices. Jesus did this when he preached his first sermon at his home synagogue in Nazareth. The people at the service that day flew into a murderous rage when he dared suggest that non-Jews would receive favorable treatment by God if they, through their faith, adhered to God's will. Throughout the ages, ruling classes have always considered privilege their right. However, the entire ministry of Jesus was the promotion of God's Kingdom, articulated in such revolutionary terms as the first shall be last and the last shall be first. With these words, our Lord made it absolutely clear that the coming of God's Kingdom marked an end to injustice everywhere.