

Americans and Oaths

- In my humble opinion, I believe that we citizens of the United States of America have a little difficulty in understanding the concept of Christ the King
 - We know kings as something we got rid of in 1783, and we know them only obliquely through the antics of the various princes of the House of Windsor
 - But we don't have anything like swearing allegiance to person, or taking a loyalty oath to a king, or even a government, for that matter.
- We only have one national oath of any significance in the U.S.A., the Pledge of Allegiance
 - I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands. One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.
 - It's a pretty wimpy oath, I think.
 - It does tell us what we pledging to, it does say something a little obliquely about why we say the pledge ("with liberty and justice for all") but there's really nothing about what we're pledging to do for our part of that oath.
- The Boy Scout Oath is a little more specific
 - For those who weren't Boy Scouts
 - On my honor, I will do my best
 - To do my duty to God and my Country
 - To obey the Scout Law;
 - To help other people at all times;
 - To keep myself physically strong
 - Mentally awake and morally straight.
 - Here's an oath with specifics, with some real requirements that a Scout is called to perform...and yet, there is no mention of a Scout's duty to any person...only to God and Country.
- The oath I took as a 2nd Lt in the U.S. Air Force is also just as specific in the duties expected of me & just as non-specific in who I was defending:
 - I, Eric N. Johnson, having been appointed a 2nd Lt in the United States Air Force, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well

and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter, SO HELP ME GOD.

- One of the basic doctrines, we as 2nd Lieutenants were taught, is that we are not pledging to support or defend the President, or Congress or an person
 - Our job was to protect the Constitution

Covenants of Israel

- The oaths we make as Americans reflect the various covenants that the people of Israel made throughout their history.
 - Covenants not made between people and king but between people and their God.
- The story of the Bible is one of the people being given covenants from God
 - And all these covenants typically
 - Began with an outline of the way God had redeemed his people
 - What was expected of the people in return
 - Blessings bestowed if the people obey the treaty and curses upon those who are unfaithful
- The Bible is the history of treaties made and treaties renewed:
 - After the Flood, between God and Noah
 - At Sinai: where God made the Israelites his people and He became their God
 - At Shechem: when Joshua held a covenant renewal ceremony
 - During the time of King Josiah (who repaired the temple after the disastrous reign of King Manasseh),
 - When the Book of the Torah was discovered as repairs were being made on the destroyed temple
 - And King Josiah called all the people together for a ceremony of covenant renewal
 - Again, when Ezra the priest return the Book of the Torah to Jerusalem after the return of the exiles from Babylon
 - When Ezra read the Book during a Seven Day festival, the Festival of Booths (in which people cut palm branches to live in during the 7 days)
 - and which concluded with a solemn act of Covenant renewal,

Baptismal Covenant

- We have that same covenant relationship in our own Baptismal Covenant in the Episcopal Church:
 - p.304 - the obligations
 - Continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers
 - Persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord
 - Proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ
 - Seek and *serve Christ in all persons*, loving your neighbor as yourself
 - Strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being
 - At the end of all of these obligations we answer, "I will with God's help."
- Just like the Israelites who renewed their covenant oath during the Feast of Booths, we Episcopalians renew our covenant 4 Times per year
 - Easter Vigil
 - Pentecost
 - All Saints Day
 - Baptism of Our Lord
- And just to point out the importance of the Covenant, it is repeated 3 X in BCP
 - Easter Vigil 292
 - Holy Baptism - 304
 - Confirmation - 416

Serving Christ the King

- Christ the King is a good time to recall our Baptismal Covenants
 - We ending one church year and one cycle of readings
 - And as we approach Advent it's a good time
 - To reflect on what I can do to put my Baptismal Covenant into actions
 - To reflect on how I can make my Baptismal Covenant more than just a Pledge of Allegiance covenant,
 - To reflect on what positive actions I can do to serve Christ the King in this world

- (1) I will, with God’s help: Recommit to writing letters on behalf of those who Amnesty International has defined as prisoners of conscience
 - Not only will I write on behalf of persecuted Christians, but also on behalf of all peoples—villages, indigenous communities, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBT people, refugees and migrants, and many other types of communities who face threats to their human rights
- (2) I will, with God’s help: Learn more about the people who we support with our Red Door/Christ Church community support funds
 - Volunteer a couple of hours handing out backpacks at the Salvation Army/ASD Ready to Learn Fair
 - Continue to wash dishes when it’s our turn at Dinner at the Brick.
 - I’ve heard much more about the real needs of the community at Dinner at the Brick as I’ve heard at city council meeting.
- (3) I will, with God’s help volunteer for a few hours at the Cold Weather Shelter
 - I had hoped for a continuation of the warm winters we’ve experienced over the past couple of years, but I understand that La Niña’s on the way
 - At the best I hope that each church might contribute one night’s worth of volunteers during the winter
 - 12 apostles:
 - 2 to welcome
 - 2 to serve meals
 - 2 to put people to bed
 - 2 to stay overnight
 - 2 to serve breakfast
 - 2 to clean up
- (4) I will, with God’s help: Commit to learning the H.S. Spanish I forgot
 - My own hesitancy about joining in on more cross-parish events in the Skagit Valley comes from fear not being able to understand what’s being said to me. (Helpful to be able to say, “Please pass the Salt.”)
- (5) I will, with God’s help: Cease from using defamatory and insulting language about others
 - More especially cease from ascribing motives to others actions, lay aside stereotypes and refuse to jump to conclusions about what I think I know about the beliefs of my son-in-law’s Alabama family members
- (6) I will, with God’s help: contact Pastor Terry Kyllö and ask how our parish can become a pledge participant in the *Neighbors in Faith* movement,

- which works with Muslims, Christians and other faiths to resist the efforts made by some to dehumanize others
 - <http://www.neighborsinfaith.org/pledge-participants/>
- (7) I will, with God's help, support groups like Kids for Peace, started by Fr. Josh Thomas.
 - an interfaith youth movement made up of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian kids dedicated to ending conflict & inspiring hope, in Jerusalem and divided societies around the world.
- (8) I will, with God's help, support refugees and undocumented immigrants.
 - God bless the Mormons: the Republican controlled Utah Legislature passed controversial bills in May 2011, which allow illegal aliens to live and work in Utah. Police also refrain from inquiring about anyone's legal status unless they are stopped or arrested for serious misdemeanors or felonies.
 - Seattle has declared itself a sanctuary city, with the same pattern as the Utah law
 - Perhaps we can politically do something similar in Anacortes, or in Skagit County
- (9) Finally, I need to remind myself, daily, that I am a steward of the Good News
 - I don't own the Good News, but, just like any resource that I have been given, I have a responsibility to care for it, to nurture it, to work with others to make it grow and expand.
 - I don't believe that the world will get better on its own or that people are gradually evolving to become more advanced species,
 - But I do believe that we use the resources that we have been entrusted with in the Good News
 - At least to point ourselves (and, maybe, to point others) towards, Christ the King, to the Kingdom of God, on earth, as it is in heaven.