

A Statement of Faith

This is the foundation under every answer I give, on any issue, from a pothole on Queen Avenue to a war on the far side of the world. My faith is mine. It is not a test I will apply to anyone else other than my own decisions and actions. But you deserve to know where I stand. You deserve my “Why?”

I believe that because an individual's beliefs are core to who they are and what they do, we must know that part of them and what drives them. I do not ask this of every individual, but those seeking public office should be open to speaking to the core reasons and beliefs behind their actions.

Scripture below is quoted from the New International Version, except where marked KJV.

A STATEMENT OF FAITH · JOSH WARK

You deserve to know where I stand.
You deserve my “Why?”

Ten sections. All of it this week.

WARK
FOR MAYOR OF ALBANY

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Loved first

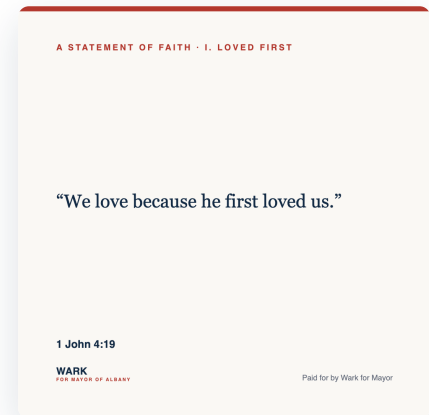
I believe God loved me before I had done one thing to deserve it, that He came for me in the person of Jesus Christ, and that everything good I have to give is a return on a gift I did not earn. Love came first, and all of my strength runs downhill from it.

"We love because he first loved us."

1 John 4:19

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 13:34-35



Love is something you do

Love that is never given life is not love. Christ fed people, healed people, washed feet. He served. When I ask what a policy is worth, I ask what it does to ensure none of us end up hungry, sick, or homeless. That is the measure He gave us.

"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

1 John 3:18

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Matthew 25:40

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Luke 10:36-37

"In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

James 2:17

A STATEMENT OF FAITH · II. LOVE IS SOMETHING YOU DO

"Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

1 John 3:18

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Community

God does not save people into isolation. He sets them in families, in congregations, in cities, and He tells His people to seek the good of the place where they live, even when it is a place they did not choose. I was baptized in Albany. I learned to serve in Albany. Nehemiah did not rebuild Jerusalem's wall by himself; he told the truth about the ruins, and the people answered, "Let us start rebuilding." A city is rebuilt the same way today. Every congregation, every charity, and every family carrying a burden for someone else belongs at the table, and my job is to set the table.

"Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

Jeremiah 29:7

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Galatians 6:2

"Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace."

Nehemiah 2:17

They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.

Nehemiah 2:18

A STATEMENT OF FAITH · III. COMMUNITY

"They replied, "Let us start rebuilding."
So they began this good work."

Nehemiah 2:18

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Protecting the innocent

Scripture is not vague about whom God expects His people to protect. It names them: the child, the widow, the stranger, the poor, the one who cannot speak for himself and the one who cannot fight back. Any government that shrugs at harm done to the defenseless has forgotten what it is for. I will not shrug. The innocent will be protected in Albany with everything the office can lawfully bring to bear.

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Proverbs 31:8-9

"Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

Psalms 82:3-4

"Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place."

Jeremiah 22:3

"Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."

Nehemiah 4:14

A STATEMENT OF FAITH · IV. PROTECTING THE INNOCENT

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Proverbs 31:8-9

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Strength in the face of evil

Evil is real. It has worn a face in every century, and in ours it most often wears the costume of an ordinary system: a machine that profits from division, that grinds down the weak and calls it efficiency, that teaches a city to hate half of itself. Christ promised me His company on the road, but He never promised the road would be clear or easy. I do not stand against wrong because I am strong. I stand because He is, and because He has never once let go of my hand in the dark. He never abandoned me in the face of loss and grief. I will tire, I will be outnumbered on some days, but I will not stop. It is because I hold each person as sacred and because I believe we are called to protect the stranger that I will stand against the machine, never against the people caught in it.



"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

Ephesians 6:10-13

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Joshua 1:9

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Psalms 23:4

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Romans 12:21

"For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline."

2 Timothy 1:7

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

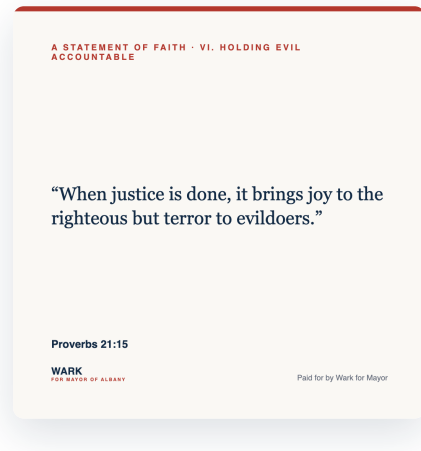
Galatians 6:9

"I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

Philippians 4:13

Holding evil accountable

Evil that goes unanswered grows. When the one who beats a spouse walks free, when the one who steals from the public keeps the job, when the ones who prey on children are quietly moved along, everyone watching learns the lesson the wicked most want taught: that nothing will happen. God gave government a sword for exactly this reason, and a leader who will not name evil, or who names it and then looks away, has laid the sword down. I will not lay it down. In Albany that translates to police who are backed, courts that are respected, a City Hall that does not look away, and a public record that says plainly who did what. Beyond Albany it means calling evil by its name, whoever committed it and whatever flag it flew. We dismantle the machine of division one piece at a time. Vengeance belongs to God. Accountability belongs to us. There will be accountability.



"For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer."

Romans 13:4

"When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong."

Ecclesiastes 8:11

"When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers."

Proverbs 21:15

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

Isaiah 5:20

"Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts."

Amos 5:15

"It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble."

Luke 17:2

"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord."

Romans 12:19

Grace

I have been forgiven more than I will ever be asked to forgive. It's why I treat the person across the table, the one who voted against me, and the one who wrote the cruel thing online with respect. Christ warned that a city divided against itself will not stand, and Lincoln, at the end of the bloodiest years this country has known, asked for malice toward none and charity for all. Grace is the hardest strength there is, and a city relearns it one forgiven trespass at a time. We must stop allowing every small argument to become the end of dialogue, the end of friendships, the shattering of families.

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Ephesians 4:32

"Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand."

Matthew 12:25

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Matthew 5:9

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

Romans 12:18

A STATEMENT OF FAITH · VII. GRACE

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Ephesians 4:32

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Humility and stewardship

An office is a trust held for other people. The Son of God came to serve, and He measured greatness by the towel and the basin. I will hold Albany's money, Albany's streets, and Albany's trust the way I would want my own held: carefully, in the open, and with the knowledge that much has been given and much will be required. I will walk humbly. I will get things wrong, and when I do I will own it and fix it.

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6:8

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:45

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

Luke 12:48

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much."

Luke 16:10

A STATEMENT OF FAITH · VIII. HUMILITY AND STEWARDSHIP

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6:8

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Hope

I believe our best days are still ahead of us, in Albany and in this country. I believe this because of the people that call this city home. I believe this because my faith is rooted in a never-ending fountain of optimistic resolve.

That resolve does not come from turning a blind eye to our challenges; it comes from looking them dead in the eye and knowing we have the collective grit to overcome them.

I see this unwavering spirit every single day on our streets and in our neighborhoods. I see it in the tireless dedication of our teachers who are shaping the minds of the next generation. I see it in the small business owners who unlock their doors before the sun comes up, pouring their sweat and soul into our local economy. And I see it in the simple, profound acts of neighbors checking on neighbors when times get tough.

We are a community built on the enduring promise that we are fundamentally stronger together.

When we choose collaboration over division, and when we choose shared progress over cynicism, there is absolutely no limit to what Albany can achieve. We know that progress isn't handed down from the top; it is built from the ground up. It is forged in our schools, on our shop floors, and in our town halls.

We are going to build a city where every family has the opportunity to not just survive, but to truly thrive. We are going to build a community where every child can dream without boundaries, and where our prosperity is shared by all who are willing to work for it.

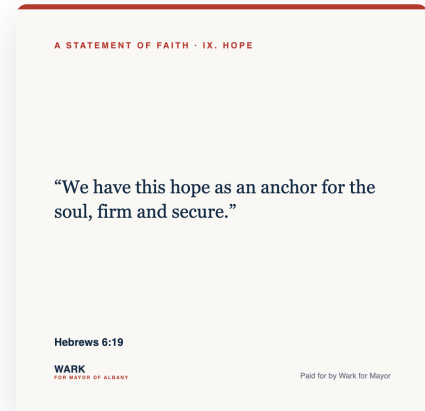
So let us step forward with that same optimistic resolve. Let us roll up our sleeves, stand shoulder to shoulder, and get to work building the tomorrow we know we deserve.

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."

Hebrews 6:19

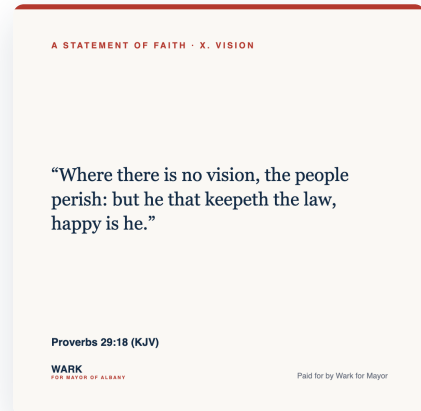
"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Romans 15:13



Vision

A leader's first job is to see, and the second is to say what he sees plainly enough that others can understand and find hope in the vision for the future. Scripture is blunt about the alternative: where there is no vision, the people perish. A city without one drifts from budget to budget, patching what breaks and calling it prudence, until the repairs cost more than the plan would have. Vision is the cure for drift. It is a picture of Albany fifty years out, clear enough to build toward, honest enough to price, and written down where anyone can read it and hold me to it. Moses was shown a land he would never enter and spent his last strength bringing his people to its edge. That is the shape of the job. The best of what I want for this city I may not live to see finished, and I intend to build toward it anyway. I have watched what becomes possible when a committed community with passion and heart is given a vision to chase. Giving Albany that vision and beginning the journey towards it is my commitment.



"Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)

"Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it."

Habakkuk 2:2 (KJV)

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?"

Luke 14:28

"For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

Hebrews 11:10

"I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it."

Deuteronomy 34:4

"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps."

Proverbs 16:9

HOW I USE THIS

Ten tests.

Every question, from a sidewalk on Pacific Boulevard to a famine on another continent, gets held against the same ten tests.

1. Does it treat every person as valuable simply for being?
2. Does it show the love of Christ in action, or only in words?
3. Does it strengthen the community, or hollow it out?
4. Does it protect the innocent?
5. Does it stand against evil without cruelty toward people?
6. Does it hold evil accountable, or let it slide?
7. Does it practice grace?
8. Is it honest, humble stewardship of what we were given?
9. Does it leave people with hope?
10. Does it serve a vision fifty years out, or only the next budget?

Scripture quoted from the New International Version, except where marked KJV.

Read it, argue with it, hold me to it: josh@warkformayor.org · warkformayor.org/faith

