

A Statement from the Dean and Wardens  
regarding the  
U.S. Supreme Court ruling regarding religious monuments on public properties.

In 2004 the Ten Commandments monument, which resides at the southwest corner of St. Michael's Cathedral, was the focus of a dispute between the Boise City Council and various offshoot religious groups. In a move to end the dispute, the Boise City Council voted to return the monument to the Order of Eagles, who had donated it to the city many years ago. In a move to aid the City and the Order find a compromise, the monument was subsequently purchased by St. Michael's Cathedral from the Fraternal Order of Eagles. To clarify, St. Michael's did not purchase the Monument from the City, nor was it donated to the Cathedral by the City or the Order of Eagles. A sales agreement documents this transaction.

At the time of the purchase, Boise City had already spent tens of thousands of dollars on the litigation of this issue; this, we believed, was a poor use of tax payer funds. It was also felt that, as this issue moved through the courts, these expenditures would have continued to increase and would have put at risk the financial support provided by the City to the hungry and homeless. Soon after the relocation of the monument, litigation did, in fact, largely cease and a city-wide referendum subsequently affirmed the Council's decision.

The decision to purchase the Monument and have it reside on the Cathedral grounds, made by Rich Demarest, Dean of St. Michael's, and supported by the Vestry and People of St. Michael's, was made for a number of reasons, not the least of which is because it was the right thing to do. The offer to relocate the monument was guided by our philosophy that, while church and state need to remain largely separate, there are times when, working together, we can find creative solutions to complex issues. As Christians, we believe it is essential that we do all in our power to support the hungry and homeless among us; stepping in as we did prevented erosion of scarce City funds that could be used to benefit that part of our community.

There are additional benefits as well. By relocating the monument to the Cathedral's property, at the busy corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and State Streets in downtown Boise, many more people have seen it, as well as read it, than ever before. We also take seriously the biblical role of the church to seek reconciliation. We believe St. Paul's words apply to this situation, "All this comes from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation;" (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 5:18)

The new Supreme Court decision affirms the authority of municipalities to decide whether, how, when, and why (or why not) to display a particular monument or other piece of art. In doing so, the Supreme Court re-affirmed the authority of our elected representatives of the Boise City Council to act as they did in regards to the Ten Commandments monument in 2004. However, the Court's decision has no bearing on the current or future ownership or location of the Ten Commandments monument. It is proudly owned by St. Michael's Cathedral, and we are grateful for the opportunity to openly display it for the benefit of the entire Boise community.