



A Note from the Pastor's Corner

I realize it's only October and we have another month to go before it's all over, but aren't you tired of it all? The "it" I'm talking about here is the conduct of the current election campaigns. We've come to expect mud-slinging and name-smearing. And it seems that every election cycle it's the same-old same-old.

Only this year it feels different. *Way* different! The negativity – the lying – the character assassinations – the meanness and hatred –etc., is sinking to newer and uglier depths every day! Are you tired of hearing people try to outdo each other with the levels of ridiculousness they're willing to go to simply to get attention and name recognition? Are you tired of the venomous condemnations aimed at anyone who doesn't agree with the candidate's view without ever hearing anything constructive? It's hard for me to believe, but we even had a minister get into the act of needing attention so desperately that he was threatening to burn Korans. The very worst of humanity is being lured out of people, and, it seems, with no regret.

All these actions are referred to as "attack ads". "It's just politics." And those who characterize such conduct in these ways give the impression that the rest of us should simply let those who deliver those 'campaign messages' off the hook. But I say we cannot. Acceptance by us is almost the same as giving our approval. And it gives incentive for the designers to up the ante for 'shock value' the next go around. And, finally, a person who is, month-in and month-out, immersed in negative campaigning can't simply switch off the 'negativity switch'.

Most of us have experienced negative leadership. One thing I learned from it is that a negative leader is incapable of building morale, of being a uniter, or of working for the greater good. They're good at creating adversaries – which they refer to as enemies – and seem to have a secondary expertise in bullying.

I don't know about you, but I'd rather focus on the positive around us. Even more than that, I'd like to *be involved* with something positive – something that will make this world a better place – something that will bring out the best in people – something that will reward people for creativity that brings results that are good for all.

That's why I will be taking part in the InterFaith Breakfast on November 4th. Sponsored by InterFaith Works of CNY and County Executive of Onondaga County, Joanne Mahoney, the purpose of this breakfast is to bring together people of energy who are committed to their faith community to participate in what is being called "Building Relationships between City and Suburban Congregations."

See, all the negativity being blasted at us day-in and day-out can take its toll on our perception of the world around us. When we are kept so busy with the overload of commitments that most of us are staggering under we hardly have time to look around us. Most people seek some kind of connection with people who are just like they are – either in person or through the internet. And when they find others who are "just like them", it's easy for them to feel like they're a group with a minority view and the rest of the world is cuckoo. So, they 'foxhole' together. It's bad enough when people feel compelled to withdraw in such a way. But when people with God-connections feel drawn in such a direction, our society is truly at risk.

What the people who envisioned this gathering on November 4th believe can happen is that each congregation can team up with another congregation that is different from them in some significant way and work together on a project that would make our local area a better place.

For instance, a city congregation might pair up with a suburban one – or a white one with a black one – or a Baptist one with a Lutheran one – or a Christian one with a Muslim one. Perhaps a team might even consist of three congregations. The project itself would be an idea that comes from the teams that form. I say the teams that form because congregations are going to select each other.

There are a number of interesting things that can result – and I'm not talking about the projects the teams undertake. 1.) There are a lot of good people in these parts. 2.) People in other congregations have a strong heart connection with God. 3.) With all the hits the image of "organized religion" has taken in recent decades, there is something we can do to rub off some of that tarnish. 4.) The discovery is made that people who, on the surface, may seem different from us actually have much more in common with us than we would have realized. And this just scratches the surface.

So, please, do what you must to arrange your schedule so you can join me, November 4th from 8:00 to 10:30 at Tucker Missionary Baptist Church at 515 Oakwood Avenue in Syracuse. There's a bright green sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall waiting for you to add your name to the list of those who will attend. Please don't let this pass you by.

Grace and peace, Pastor Bud