

Plan for Nov. 9: Refocus Your Congregation from White House to Church House

Americans are dissatisfied with the presidential choices offered by the Democratic and Republican parties.

“For the first time in more than two decades, a majority of voters express dissatisfaction with their choices for president this fall: Just 40 percent say they are very or fairly satisfied, while 58 percent say they are not too or not at all satisfied,” [reported](#) Pew Research Center on July 7.

By September, voter dissatisfaction had grown.

Pew [reported](#), “Voter satisfaction with the choice of presidential candidates, already at a two-decade low, has declined even further. A new survey finds that just a third of registered voters say they are very or fairly satisfied with the choices, while 63 percent say they are not too or not at all satisfied. That represents a 7-percentage point drop since June in the share of voters expressing satisfaction with their candidate choices.”

One hears discontentment in church and over meals with friends, reads the frustration on social media platforms, overhears the dissatisfaction at the grocery store.

“Ain’t nobody happy” – except maybe the deeply ideological partisans.

It is an ugly, divisive presidential campaign.

Hillary Clinton called Trump’s supporters “deplorables.”

“To just be grossly generalistic, you can put half of Trump supporters into what I call the basket of deplorables,” she said. “Right? Racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic, you name it.”

Who can forget Trump’s horrid comment about undocumented Mexicans?

“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best ... They’re sending

people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us," he asserted. "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."

As the election speeds our way, political ads will get nastier. Rumors will get wilder. Debate lines will get sharper. Apocalyptic claims will get more intense with each side claiming that the sky will fall if the other candidate wins.

The civil discourse crash has been accelerated by lots of factors. One can't rightly blame it all on the media, although cable news fuels a lot of the ugliness.

One can rightly wonder if reducing positions to 140 characters leads to extra meanness and distortion. One can blame the candidates and their surrogates, whose task is to tear down the other side.

Partisan clergy certainly haven't helped. For the first time in a long time, conservative Christian clergy haven't claimed that GOP stands for God's Only Party. Some have. Many have distanced themselves from Trump.

The same can hardly be said of liberal Christian clergy who seem to think the Democratic Party is the divine party of God, the salvation of America.

Dangerous nastiness in the public square infects the local congregation. Church members "unfriend" friends on Facebook. Congregants forward links to other congregants of stories that are demeaning of the candidate they despise.

Verbal digs are made over coffee before Sunday school classes. Pulpits declare barely hidden partisan planks.

Election Day is Nov. 8, a Tuesday. Nov. 9 is a Wednesday, the most important midweek day of the church calendar.

Some church members will be ecstatic over the election results. Others will be resentful. A low-grade fever will exist in churches. A cold war might even emerge in some places.

Proactive clergy will want to anticipate such scenarios and plan to refocus their congregations' attention from the White House to the church house, from partisan politics to the church's purpose.

Frank Lewis, pastor of First Baptist Church of Nashville, has put into play what appears to be a way to refocus his congregants back to the church's core calling.

He has scheduled a showing of "[The Disturbances](#)" on Nov. 9. Here's a film about missionaries facing an unanticipated crisis and abundant moral challenges. It's an almost lost story that finds relevance in today's world.

What better way to remind church members of both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission?

Life is more than presidential politics. Recapturing congregant attention and commitments will require refocusing.

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