

Will Churches Really Help Those Without Hope?

This Thanksgiving season, I'm especially grateful to have many things that cause me to be thankful and have hope.

I'm also painfully aware that there are many around me who don't seem to find many things that give them cause for hope.

What does that mean to our churches? What is the responsibility of the church within the community to be a part of bringing hope to those who feel hopeless?

What role does government play and what role does the faith community play in offering solutions to some of today's huge problems?

Sometimes problems seem so overwhelming it is easier to ignore them and pretend they don't exist.

But then, as people of faith, we look to Holy Scripture to inform us and teach us what God would want us to do and to see modeled for us what Jesus actually did.

When we seriously do that, it's impossible to overlook the hundreds of verses (more than 2,000!) that address these issues.

Caring for people and their basic needs should not be a "Democrat" or "Republican" issue, but rather a moral expectation of those who say they are people of faith and followers of Christ.

When we are more linked to one another across the globe, we cannot pretend there are not inequities and injustice all around us - locally and globally.

When children are dying from lack of food and water and there is enough food and water for all on this incredible planet, it is shameful.

When a Congress cannot set aside self-gratification and self-interest to honestly seek ways to solve some of our more serious problems, something is terribly wrong.

So what does this say to your church and to mine? Aren't we already busy trying to keep our doors open and tending to the weekly needs of our congregations?

Where are we going to find the time to be interested in getting involved in our community? Don't we use enough energy trying to keep our congregations happy with worship style and comfort when they come together each Sabbath?

How could a busy pastor or church member find time to spend a couple of hours in a coffee shop each week and get to know the people who work there and really listen to the people who come through the doors and find out what keeps them awake at night?

These questions are honest concerns for most of us.

But the truth is that unless we figure out how to do that, we are in the process of becoming completely irrelevant.

It is not an exaggeration to say that most of our churches are within a decade or so of closing the doors. Read any current poll and you will see what the majority of people in our country think about "churches," "Christians," organized religion of any kind.

It's pretty scary; they don't like us very much.

Can we blame them? Look at what churches and what religious figures make the headlines most days. It's not a pretty picture.

However, those same people, when polled about what they think about Jesus Christ, have much more positive responses - even when they don't really know that much about him.

What they do know is that he loved people. He took time to be with people - ordinary people - even outcasts.

They know that he, too, didn't like the picture he saw of "church leaders" and "religious folks" very much in his time.

In fact, his words for them were much harsher than for the "sinners" whose paths crossed his every day.

There is a way to begin making a difference in our communities, our state and even our nation.

A relatively new organization, "[MissouriFaithVoices](#)," is a statewide, faith-based organization for bringing about change and hope where there is injustice and little hope. If you're interested in knowing more, contact [JimHill](#).

Already this group has impacted Missouri in passing some new legislation to ensure healthcare for every child in our state.

Because of that, 70,000 more children now have access to healthcare. But that is not enough. There are so many other justice issues to be tackled.

What will the faith community do about that?

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