

Hi friends,

We are rapidly approaching the season of Advent. Holiday season will soon be upon us, as we find creative ways of celebrating Thanksgiving in a few days. I know for many of us the stress of a (as of writing this... undecided) election will make some of those gatherings at best awkward, and at worst unbearable. (I know some of us are at least partially thankful for Time, Distance and Shielding protocols this Thanksgiving).

Since the election results (or lack there-of) have been disproportionately heavy on most of our hearts, I thought I would take this opportunity to give you some of my thoughts as your Pastor on the topic of elections. You can see the short video I put out on Facebook regarding violence after elections HERE <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3483553078402924>.

But for today I would like to share this: For over 25 years I have made it a practice to not endorse one candidate or another. Those of you who know me on a more personal basis will certainly know the candidate I voted for, but as my roll as an ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church and pastor of KFUMC, I have tried to create a space where differing opinions can exist under the umbrella of God's grace. AND I am called by God to be the pastor for all of us, even if we disagree on political issues.

I understand and appreciate the advantages that being an American offers, and am thankful for those who sacrificed and did their best to create a nation that in the best of our nature represents peace, justice and liberty for all. BUT as a disciple of Jesus and my belief in the redemptive work of the Kingdom of God, my allegiance to that Kingdom supersedes my allegiance to any nation or government. Because of that, I rely on what I believe to be true about God, Scripture, and my relationship with others to impart wisdom when it comes to matters of government and personal responsibility.

There are several passages in scripture that serve as touchstones for me and my faith, one of them is the passage written by the prophet Micah (Micah 6:8), "*He has shown all you people what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God*". As a frail human being, I try and let these words of wisdom guide me when I study a candidate's platform, when I support programs or organizations, when I participate in an event and most of all, as I provide leadership for our congregation and greater church.

Justice, mercy, and humility are closely linked together:

JUSTICE, as scripture speaks of it:

- Demands care for those who are most vulnerable.
- Demands making wrongs right.
- Demands that systems that dehumanize or devalue anyone created in God's image ought not be.

MERCY as scripture speaks of it:

- Applies to all humans from womb to grave.
- Caring for those who stand in need because of disaster, unjust systems, violence, and persecution.

HUMILITY as scripture speaks of it:

- Unites people around good and truth.
- Sacrifices for the good of others.
- Provides leadership that brings people together around a greater calling and welcomes people in that journey rather than tribalism, partisanship, and exclusion.

I realize that no candidate is going to be able to score high on this scale in all areas. And I realize that I have much to learn and much growing to do to reflect these divinely inspired principles, but as a nation who strives to be an agent of good in the world... good that we see defined in what Christians believe are sacred scripture... I believe that this is what we strive for.

There is a reason I write this after an election has taken place. I want to confirm to members and friends of KFUMC that the work we do here, the community we create, regardless of our individual political affiliation will strive to love God with all we are and love our neighbor as ourselves and reflect Justice, Mercy and Humility through the love and grace of Jesus.

Looking forward to the days ahead with this community.

Pastor Mark.

Here are some things I want you to be aware of:

- 1) We will be having our worship service virtually at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/PiratesoftheColumbia>. Originally we had planned to be having another Drive-In Church service, but this Sunday temperatures were forecasted to be in the 20's, so those setting up and leading us in worship would need to be outside in sub-freezing weather for several hours. We are hoping to be able to announce some changes in worship for the season of Advent soon, so keep an eye out for news about that.
- 2) Butter Braids: The Jr. and Sr. UMY are busy working their way through the membership directory selling delicious Butter Braids. If you have not received a phone call and would like to order these wonderful pastries, please call the church office by Friday, November 13th. They come in 7 different flavors: Cinnamon, Cherry, Apple, Cream Cheese, Raspberry, Caramel Rolls and Blue Berry Cream Cheese and they are \$12 each. This is a fundraiser for the Jr. & Sr. UMY Mission Trips.
- 3) Charge Conference will be happening Sunday, November 22nd. This year's Charge Conference will be happening virtually via a Zoom meeting. As we get more information about the mechanics and logistics of how that meeting will take place, we will pass it along to you and give you the information you need to participate.