

Reflection for Tuesday 20 October 2020

Politics and Lutherans

Jeremiah 29:7

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you in exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

The other day I read an article in Living Lutheran (October 2020) entitled, "Discipleship in a Democracy, how should Lutherans be involved in politics?" The article written by Michael Cooper-White, the president emeritus of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, was extremely prompt given the election coming up on November 3, 2020. If you are like me, you just want it over. The calls, texts, daily barrage of mailed flyers and the incessant television ads are getting to be more than most of us can endure. And that is all on top of the pandemic which has us fatigued and ready to move to 2021.

At the end of the day we are citizens of the United States and must exercise our right to vote. As I have said many times, how you vote is between you and your conscience. I will never tell you who to vote for. I will tell you that it is your responsibility to vote and make sure that everyone can cast a vote free from harassment.

The one thing that jumped out at me in the article was the quote about our trust in the federal government. Cooper-White noted that the percentage of U.S. citizens who trust the federal government to do what is right fell steadily from 77% in 1964 to 17% in 2019. That is a staggering lack of trust in our government. I am not saying that the statistic is incorrect, but my thought is how did the federal government get to this extremely low level of trust and what do we do about it? After all as citizens, the federal government is ours and as Lutherans we are called to support government for the benefit of all in our society.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has advocacy offices in many states and in Washington DC. Not to lobby for the interests of the ELCA but instead to hold our government accountable to serve those who are marginalized and have no voice in society. In short, our job is to hold the federal government accountable and make sure that the government is taking care of all members of society, especially those most in need. We need to look at how the federal government and for that matter, all governments, are helping those most in need. At this point in time, I am not convinced that we are looking out for and speaking on behalf of those with no voice and in need in our society.

We have an opportunity to cast votes to support candidates who we believe will start the kinds of programs and services that are needed by those most marginalized in our society. We also can join with other people of faith to work together to start change. One group is the Power Interfaith Lehigh Valley, and we are working to become members which will enable us to help set the course of change in the Lehigh Valley. We will also develop a social justice ministry to gather people together who want to work for substantive change in our community. If you are interested in social justice, please contact me via email at strump@ptd.net or cell phone 610-217-1375.

Have a day that matters!

Pastor Suzanne