

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
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MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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The Political Jesus

I read a magazine article recently titled *Was My Vote Sinful?* The article was written in response to a politically charged flyer that was labeling one particular American political party as evil. The flyer ended up being denounced by the head of the denomination of the congregation that was targeted by the flyer. I began to wonder how many people fall for such fallacious rhetoric. The article went on to explain that this particular question is the wrong question to begin with because churches should be uniting the people, not dividing the people.

When I see political propaganda on Facebook I am tempted to respond. However, wisdom dictates that I should refrain from publicly correcting misguided rhetoric even when fallacious rhetoric contradicts logic. Besides, most of us have been taught not to mix religion and politics. So, I refrain from engaging in emotionally charged and divisive discussions in a public arena. Unfortunately, that advice does not prevent people from becoming fractured by partisan politics. I look forward to the opportunities when I can meet with such emotionally charged individuals and engage in intellectual discussion.

There is one particular question that many in our faith communities struggle to answer. What is the church's role in our politically charged environment? To answer that question I will ask my two most favorite questions of all. What did Jesus say? What did Jesus do? When it comes to the political arena Jesus did not say or do anything. That's because Jesus had something that is much more important to do. Jesus stayed focused on his mission. Asking what Jesus said and did presents the opportunity to steer people away from the distractions that divide us and guides people to what is truly important in your lives - staying focused Jesus and our efforts to continue his mission.

I want to make sure we understand that our divine mission is to bring people closer to God and each other. Prior to being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me (John 17:21 NRSV). When we are united with Jesus, in spirit and in our actions, and when we focus on what Jesus said and did, we are one. We will never be one if we let politics, emotionally charged social issues, and contemporary rhetoric divide us. The American Reformation Movement was all about reforming our religious system to get back to being the original church that Jesus established. That's because religious practices have changed over the centuries due to human preferences and influences. These human changes gradually pull us away from being the true church that Jesus established. The main way that we can get close to being the church that Jesus built, within the realm of contemporary society, is if we have Jesus centered theology that is focused on what Jesus said and did. Jesus rejected political division and the division that politics always brings.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to be in covenant with God and with each other. To be in covenant we recognize our differences but strive to serve a higher purpose of reconciliation. We put our hopes in something much more fulfilling and everlasting than politics or government. When we witness people that get stuck in political dogma it presents an opportunity for us to help get them back in focus on the love of Jesus. When we live our lives molded after the personality characteristics of Jesus, we live our lives as Jesus not as one that is bothered by politics. We live our lives following the one that brings to us the word of God and the grace of God.

George