

A PASTORAL LETTER ON ELECTION RESULTS

November 3, 2010

Urbandale United Church of Christ

Elections are inherently adversarial. They create clear lines of division between candidates, propositions and parties. As such, they also create winners and losers. While most of us learn as we mature how to cope with losing and winning, there are times when there is more at stake than team standings, bragging rights or who has to put away the checkers. This is one of those times.

The danger when we win a contest is that it may go to our heads. We may think more of ourselves than is warranted or that we are somehow on the side of divine providence. In the arena of public life, we may believe that we have a mandate, that the hard work is done because the people have spoken, or that we can dismiss the view of the minority because they clearly lost. Most of us can probably think of times when we have fallen prey to such thinking.

The danger when we lose a contest is that we take it personally. It is easy to allow our hope to be squelched and to abandon the struggle because we have suffered a defeat. For many of our members, it will be hard not to take this personally, because in many ways, the results of this election could be construed as a referendum on who we are, how we love and our place in the community. Perhaps in our insulated utopian environment that is Urbandale UCC, we have grown complacent in our commitment to justice for the LGBT community. Maybe we imagined that the world had changed and that public opinion was in sync with what we knew to be true. If so, then it is best that we are confronted with a harsh reality that will be difficult to accept.

But for many of us, the world is harsh enough. We must live with and rise above discrimination and hate every day of our lives and the pain that is evoked by the results of this election is real and unrelenting. It diminishes our lives in ways that are difficult to explain to one who has not experienced it. So all of us must be sensitive to what others are going through. All of us must take responsibility for the well-being of our brothers and sisters. All of us must be a source of support for one another. We must counter the message of rejection and judgment with a message of acceptance, affirmation, solidarity and love.

For my part, as your pastor, I want to say again, as clearly as I can, that each of you is a cherished, beloved, wondrous, beautiful creation of God. You have gifts and graces that are needed by your brothers and sisters in Christ. You have a place at the table and in God's heart and in the eternal realm that is God's. And you have a community of faith where you are loved and valued and we will stand by one another as we face the harshness that embeds itself in the world.

Who knows? Perhaps God has in store for us a mission of truth-telling and justice-working that will be for us the fulfillment of our calling in this time and place. Our prayer continues to be that God's will be done. Amen.

Pastor Dave