

The End is Nigh! (But it's not November 8th)

by Michael Neuroth

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I admit that over the past few months, I have swung drastically between hysteria and malaise in response to this year's election. It is a critical election with significant implications for our nation regardless of the outcome. Future Supreme Court vacancies, immigration reform, the cost of health care, foreign policy, and criminal justice reform are but a few of the areas that will be fundamentally shaped by our next president. When I consider these implications compared to the ugly campaign and debate rhetoric, I confess that my hysteria and malaise grow.

Getting involved in "get out the vote" (GOTV) and other election activities is one way of moving beyond the mixed feelings we have about this election. We must take our civic duty seriously and support voter mobilization activities, but we must also speak out on the issues and values at stake in this election. The UCC's "Our Faith Our Vote" campaign (ucc.org/ourfaithourvote) offers helpful resources for this, including liturgical materials for "Vote Faithfully" Sunday on November 6th.

Engagement in this election is critical given its implications. What a powerful signal it would send to the world if, in the midst of such an ugly election season, record numbers turned out to vote. However, I believe that our election work does not end on November 8th. In spite of what our media is telling us, we are not standing on the brink of the Apocalypse. November 8th is not the end of the world! It is certainly not the end of our work.

No matter who wins the election, our next president will face a deeply polarized nation that has been pulled into a dark place. As the campaigns have focused on the worst in each candidate, the worst has also been brought out in us. How will we begin to heal our nation on November 9th? How will we move past our hysteria or malaise and set our minds on bridging the divides in our communities? I believe we need to be as engaged and active in our post-election work as we have been leading up to Election Day.

In the coming months, our churches can be sanctuaries to engage our differences and extend a balm to heal wounds. We can commit ourselves to listen with renewed interest to views different from ours, and seek to find common ground together. Our willingness to overcome our own malaise and engage ‘the other’ in these next few months will be critical.

As Parker J. Palmer writes, “When we choose to engage, not evade, the tension of our differences, we will become better equipped to participate in a government of, by, and for the people . . .” Whatever your politics, in order to ‘make America great’ we must also work to be ‘stronger, together.’ Let us not lose hope for the work ahead.

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