

I love and respect my FB friends who have a variety of opinions on all topics from wearing a mask to the actions of the President to theology, etc. This morning I saw more angry posting than usual and it weighed on my heart. Here is an article on what Wesley said about voting and I believe it applies to all areas where we disagree. I hope it stirs some thought and reflection.

John Wesley on Voting (and American Politics)

By Matt O'Reilly UMC Pastor

To state the obvious, American politics are polarized. That polarization has cultivated a lack of civility. That incivility has resulted in both sides demonizing the other and, at times, engaging in acts of violence. When citizens begin engaging in violence against political opponents, their society is in danger. A republic cannot be maintained without debate marked by civility and charity.

How to Vote

The temptation to speak evil of those with whom we disagree politically is not new. John Wesley was concerned about it in the 18th century. And he had some wisdom for the people called Methodists as they considered the candidates for whom they would vote. As we head into the midterm elections next week, we would do well to follow his advice. **Wesley had six points to keep in mind, which he recorded in his journal from October 6, 1774.**

He wrote: "I met those of our society who had votes in the ensuing election, and advised them,

- 1. To vote, without fee or reward, for the person they judged most worthy:***
- 2. To speak no evil of the person they voted against: And,***
- 3. To take care their spirits were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side.***
- 4. Don't sell your vote.***
- 5. Don't speak evil of your opponents.***

6. Keep a generous spirit toward those who disagree with you. Six essential elements of healthy and constructive political engagement.

Can the Church lead?

What is perhaps most tragic is that the demonization of political opponents has been perpetuated by many in the Church. This is true on both sides of the aisle. Christians on the left and Christians on the right have both participated in less than charitable tactics and speech in the effort to advance their political views and agendas. Rather than leading the way in robust political discourse, the Church has sadly participated in the degradation of healthy debate.

Love your (political) enemies

Wesley's six points are only an application of Jesus' command to "love your enemies." (Matthew 5:44). It is absolutely impossible to obey our Lord's command to love your enemies and, at the same time, speak evil and sharpen your spirit against political opponents. That is not to suggest we avoid political debate. Rather, it is to avoid unhealthy shouting matches in order to make space for rigorous, yet charitable, political debate. Detest is not synonymous with debate. To the contrary, it's actually quite difficult to debate people we detest. What we need is political discourse that is thoughtful, clear, and charitable, all the while taking the points on which we diverge with the utmost seriousness.

My prayer is that we have not gone too far down the path of incivility. Perhaps we can repent and return to political debate that honors God and one another. Perhaps the people of God can even lead the way.