

PRAISE REPORT

July - Sept. 2020



C A L L I N G P E O P L E H I G H E R



Pastor's Corner

The elections are upon us. People are nervous and uptight. As you read this article, you may be wondering why the praise report should even approach the subject. Will I weigh in on the side of your candidate or party or the other guys?

Christianity and politics. Some are convinced that these two entities are totally separate and best left that way. Some people who are very serious about their politics refuse to let faith influence their political decisions. Of course, for that to occur, they must not allow their religious beliefs to motivate their thoughts, feelings, or behavior. In that case, I must wonder, what good are religious beliefs? On the other hand, some people who are very serious about their Christianity want nothing to do with public life because they think politics are corrupt and dirty. Yet, is it possible that political life has come to be viewed this way because many with strong religious convictions have shunned it? It hasn't always been that way.

- George Washington prayed, "Let me live according to those holy rules which Thou hast this day prescribed in Thy holy word.... Direct me to the true object, Jesus Christ the way, the truth and the life. Bless, O Lord, all the people of this land."
- Thomas Jefferson (who some claim wanted an absolute separation of government and religion) said: "Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are a gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever."
- Teddy Roosevelt went so far as to assert: "In this actual world, a churchless community, a community where men have abandoned and scoffed at, or ignored their Christian duties, is a community on the rapid down-grade."

To decide what attitude a Christian ought to hold toward civic involvement, let's consider a couple questions: "What is God's view of government?" and "What does the Bible say about a Christian's interaction with civil governments?"

**In Person & Online Worship
At 10 AM on Sundays**

Live streamed on Facebook

*Also available at mountzion-umc.org
under Video Resources*

*Watch for up to date Worship times, and
resumption of ministry plans in the
Connect Weekly.*

WE ARE CALLED

- To "love God with all your heart" is to WORSHIP
- To "love your neighbors as yourself" is MINISTRY
- To "go...make disciples" is EVANGELISM
- To "baptize" is to incorporate into FELLOWSHIP
- To "teach them...all things" is DISCIPLESHIP



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What is God's view of government?

God has put into place civil authority: The authorities that exist have been established by God (see Romans 13:1). Romans 13 goes on to explain why God set up the concept of human government: *The authorities are God's servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God's servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience.*—Romans 13:4-5 (NLT) Government is authorized by God to execute justice, to establish order in society, and to provide for the common good.

What does the Bible say about a Christian's interaction with civil governments?

- We should pray for government officials: *I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity.*—1 Timothy 2:1-2 (NLT)
- We should pay what we owe to the government: *Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and government fees to those who collect them, and give respect and honor to those who are in authority.*—Romans 13:7 (NLT)
- We should show respect to those placed in authority: *Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. Fear God, and respect the king.*—1 Peter 2:17 (NLT)
- We should obey the authorities over us: *For the Lord's sake, submit to all human authority—whether the king as head of state, or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honor those who do right. It is God's will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you.*—1 Peter 2:13-15 (NLT)

Of course, our obedience is not without limitations. We quickly think of the examples of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the Old Testament. The apostles in the NT stood before the Sanhedrin and boldly declared: *"We must obey God rather than any human authority."*—Acts 5:29 (NLT) If an authority requires something that contradicts what God clearly says, we must disobey that requirement. But perhaps most significant in all the Bible's instructions about a Christian's relationship with government is the mandate that Christians are to actively influence their culture, including government.

You don't have to go very far to find biblical examples such as Joseph (Genesis 41) and Daniel (Daniel 6). Jesus describes the kind of impact he expects us to make this way: *"You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house."*—Matthew 5:13-15 (NLT)

Government does not save us. Political influence can never bring about the kingdom of God or a secular utopia. Good laws can help restrain evil (that's what law is for); however, laws do not make people virtuous. Rather, virtuous people make good societies. That is what is meant by the dictum, "You can't legislate morality." Yet all law is an expression of someone's morality (or lack of it); therefore, it is important to become involved in the lawmaking process. What we must do is allow our Savior Jesus Christ exert his influence through us:

- By interceding for those in authority and those desiring to be.
- By communicating with office holders, our friends, etc.
- By joining organizations, movements and campaigns you can support as a Christian.
- By voting for those who most closely support biblical principles.
- By running for public office or by supporting Christians with whom you can agree on pertinent issues who run for office.

Francis Scott Key, a deeply religious attorney, wrote the words to the "Star-Spangled Banner," our national anthem. Most Americans know the first stanza by heart, but the last stanza abundantly expresses Key's belief that God protected our land:

O! Thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved home and the war's desolation;
Blessed with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto, "In God is our trust!"
And the Star-Spangled Banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

It is up to us in our lifetime to make that motto, "In God We Trust" mean something. Your fellow servant, Pastor Leonard

PS—This article ran in Mount Zion publications in November of 2004 and 2016. It could not be more relevant today.

3rd Quarter Happenings

Youth Ministry

Despite covid, our youth group has remained active in seeking and serving God! We took advantage of being able to meet via zoom and continued to meet all the way to the end of June, which is 1 month after we would usually break for the summer! It was such a blessing for them to continue to see one another, talk and grow in their relationship with God during a time when so many aren't able to meet in person at church. During this past quarter, the youth traveled to Woodlawn Virginia to serve at Joy Ranch from



August 3rd through August 8th.

We took 18 middle and high school youth, as well as 10 adults. We worked hard, helping to clean out, clean up, and repaint a office building and a supply room on site. The group also did some intensive yard work which entailed clearing out weeds, cutting grass on fields, and removal of brush/undergrowth so that Joy ranch has room for more activities and farm animals. We were able to share meals with the children and house parents as well as play softball, hockey, and take a "short" (about 5 miles) hike at the nearby New River Trail State Park. We also tie dyed shirts that the children were so excited about that they started to wear them the next day! Our group also had opportunities to gather together and grow in our faith walk and as a youth group. During the week , three of our high school students shared devotions with the group about how blessed we are, about how God has made us enough, and



how we are called to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. We thank everyone at Mount Zion who contributed to make this trip possible. Thank you to those who wrote letters of encouragement, made blessing boxes, gave items that we used or donated, gave money, those who came and those of you who prayed for us before, during and after our trip. God is good and is using our youth to share his love!

Sarah Beth

HIGHLIGHTS FROM CELEBRATION SUNDAY

Sunday, September 27th was Celebration Sunday. Here are some of the highlights we celebrated this past year!



We began livestreaming services on 3/1/20.



3rd Grade Bibles were presented on 9/20/20.



Extended the ministry reach of Mount Zion near and far through an extra \$50K beyond our budget to:

- Community of Hope-local
- Smithfield Rescue Mission-local
- Churches Helping Churches-national
- Zoe Empowers-global-3 year support of a group of 75 orphans in Rwanda



Installed security cameras throughout the church

praise
the
LORD!

Went to online only worship on 3/22/20, and have not missed a Sunday of providing worship in-person, online, or both



Care Ministry sent over 350 cards, made countless calls, visit those that are homebound weekly, walked with our church family through illness and death and celebrated victories and milestones

MISSION'S MOMENT

Dailyn Clark

Last September, I arrived at a Youth With a Mission (YWAM) Discipleship Training School called Fire & Fragrance. I spent 3 months in Hawaii attending classes and dance training and deepening my relationship with God before spending 3 months in India as a missionary with a small team of 8.

During our time in India, we had the privilege of reaching thousands of people, encouraging dozens of churches, getting involved in children's ministries, assisting a Red Light District ministry, leading women's conferences, cleaning and repainting a school, encouraging and discipling local leaders, and helping to plant house churches and prayer groups! Through those times, we saw 523 hear the gospel for the first time, 456 salvations, 27 healed from injuries, diseases, infertility, etc. - as well as many deliverances and baptisms of the Holy Spirit. I personally had the delight of choreographing a skit we were able to share often, as well as frequently performing and teaching worship dances.

Although missionaries and Christianity aren't technically illegal yet, conversion is illegal, and evangelizing or being known as a Christian can be dangerous, so it was an honor to be able to give fresh support to the incredible prayer warriors, evangelizers, and leaders engaged in the long battle there – as well as to spend time loving and serving the wonderful, servant-hearted people of India! To continue to follow my journey or for more information, please email me at dailynclark@twc.com



Me (in the white) during prayer ministry



Playing with the village children during a project

FINANCE

Financial Update through August 31, 2020

Total Contributions to General Fund	\$362,473
Interest Income(Gen Fund)	\$ 515
Less Total Budgeted Expenses	(\$296,191)
<u>Less Escrowed Apportionments</u>	<u>(\$ 40,944)</u>
Income Exceeds Expenses	\$ 25,853

Building Fund

Building Fund Carryover from 2019	\$413,398
Money Moved by Finance Comm from Bequests	\$ 50,000
Interest Earned on Building Fund CD's in 2020	\$ 872

<u>Individual/Family 2020 Contributions</u>	<u>\$ 7,414</u>
Total of Building Fund	\$471,684

Fundraiser

Ole Fashion Supper (100% to Missions)	\$ 7,822
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Endowment

Endowment Principal 1/1/20	\$ 10,900
Unrealized Gain (Subject to market conditions)	<u>\$ 2,412</u>
Market Value 8/31/20	\$ 13,312