

Sacred Social Justice Campaign Reflection 3

Rev. Clare L. Petersberger, October 9, 2024

READING

Choose for each of your tribes individuals who are wise, discerning, and reputable, and I will make them your leaders. Deuteronomy 1:13

On September 28, members of the congregation I serve met to confront both the realities of climate change and the opportunities to imagine a different future. We all felt the urgency of a different tomorrow. Hurricane Helene had just ripped through the south. Some who gathered had family living near Ashville, NC where destruction was, in the words of headlines, “Biblical” in its magnitude.

I don’t know about you, but when I think of mitigating climate change, I think of changing the source of our power from coal, oil, and gas to solar energy or wind power. I think of public transportation and less travel via airplanes. I think of recycling more and consuming less. I think of big changes which require world leaders---and not just leaders in Baltimore County.

Yet what I heard in more than one small group was that what we are lacking, fundamentally, is relationships. We do not know our neighbor who has installed a political sign of a candidate who does not acknowledge the reality of climate change. We do not know the neighbor who is arguing that “strangers” not be allowed to use the new high school’s track. We do not know the citizen arguing against expanding the light rail because “of what it will do to the neighborhood.” We do not know our neighbors.

In Deuteronomy, God instructs the Hebrew people to “Choose for each of your tribes individuals who are wise, discerning, and reputable” that God might make them leaders. Fundamentally, this is what our democracy is all about: choosing/voting for individuals “who are wise, discerning, and reputable” for our leaders. On September 28th, we were encouraged to vote not only for individuals who care about climate change who are at the top of a ticket but down ballot as well. We were encouraged to vote as if the future of humanity depends on it because it does.

Yet I keep coming back to the lament I heard on September 28 that we do not know our neighbors. Perhaps this is the work that awaits us after voting on (or before) November 5. How well do you know your neighbors?

PRAYER

Creator God, may we intentionally nurture relationships with those we do not know. May we build communities of care filled with people we can trust to help us when the next storm of the century impacts us and people who can trust that we will be there to help them. May we choose for each of our tribes individuals who are wise, discerning, and reputable for you to make our leaders that we might co-create a healthy planet for our children’s children. Amen.