



Our Mission:

To identify and strengthen leaders so that every congregation makes new and mature disciples for Jesus Christ.

Now What?

November 6, 2016

Dear Presbytery of Tampa Bay,

I am writing this on Sunday afternoon before the national election takes place. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers. We offer prayers for peace, unity and purity of the church. God, remind us of our vows to seek to serve with energy, intelligence, imagination and love. Remind us that we promised to be a friend among our colleagues (*no matter their understanding of politics*). Help us, O God, to seek in our own lives to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love our neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world. We promised to do this. Help us keep our promises. Give us generosity of spirit. Let it be so. I'm big on vows and keeping the promises we make. You all know that about me. Those vows we take have sound basis in scripture. Thanks be to God.

God *only* knows the outcome of the vote. Outcome. A loaded word. Of course, outcome goes far beyond who won and who lost. It's the Now What question. The result is in some measure how we as a Christian people respond to the vote. How we act toward the *OTHERS*. Some of us are the *OTHERS*, by the way. Let us remember that a lot of Americans see things way differently than we do. Troubling, I know. And let's remember that they are also created in the image of God. Hard to believe, I know. God help us. ALL of us. I pray for God's grace to rain down on us all as we figure out what on earth to do with the results of this election and whatever else divides us. I urge you to be circumspect about what you post or repost on social media. Give deepest thought and prayer before you hit the send key, please-please.

Recently Reverend Bill Wildhack shared with me Washington's Prayer for the Nation. It was printed inside the cover of a World War II military chaplain handbook we found in the presbytery resource center as we packed to

move the office. The world was different in those days, but it seems to me that maybe we can embrace the spirit of this prayer today. The language is antiquated and not entirely politically correct, but I offer it to you verbatim:

"Almighty God, we make our earnest prayer that Thou wilt keep the United States in thy holy protection, that Thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government, and entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another and for their fellow citizens of the United States at large. And finally that Thou wilt most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation. Grant our supplications, we beseech Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Written at Newburg, June 8, 1783, and sent to the Governors of all the States.*)"

I look forward to seeing many of you next week at the stated meeting of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay. We need to be together. We need to build each other up. We need Jesus.

Love,

Patrice Hatley
Coach and Coordinator
Presbytery of Tampa Bay

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