

November 12, 2016 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church  
Romans 13:1-7; Daniel 2:21; Matthew 22:21 “Now What” by Andy McDonald

What a week! Thinking about the election process of our nation this week I was reminded of the long running introduction that for years would open the ABC Wide World of Sports. While the video rolled Jim McKay’s voice would be heard: “Spanning the globe to bring you the constant variety of sports. The thrill of victory...and...the agony of defeat.

Across our nation and in this very room today we recognize that in this election large numbers have identified with each side and so there is the feeling of the thrill of victory on one side and the agony of defeat on the other.

In response to the “Morning Prayer” that I sent out to you one the day after the election, I received a nice message that included this text of Isaiah 1:26 from a contemporary translation. ...I will bring back legislators who have integrity. People like your founding fathers, principled decision makers. Then your city will be called honorable and just, a model of ethics, trustworthy and strong!”

Perspective is everything. Some see this scripture fulfilled by the election and others claim it as promised hope for the future!

Those on the side of victory, especially Christians, need to be called to humility, kindness, civility.

And those on the side of defeat, especially Christians, need to be called to humility, kindness, civility.

It might be time to heed the counsel of the father of Methodism, John Wesley: October 6, 1774 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 that their spirit were not sharpened against those that voted on the other side.”

We are all privileged to be part of the great American Experiment, and from early in the experiment of this republic, we established a long history of egregious and unstable campaigns followed by much more affable and stable administrations.

At least until this year the presidential election of 1800 has generally considered the nastiest in American history. Indeed, the campaign did not reflect well on the Founders or this new government. The race between Federalist John Adams and Republican Thomas Jefferson was raucous, bitter, and unpredictable. Historian David McCullough wrote that according to the opposing campaigns, "if Jefferson was a Jacobin, a shameless southern libertine, and a 'howling' atheist, Adams was a Tory, a vain Yankee scold, and, if truth be known, 'quite mad.'"<sup>1</sup>

The charges and countercharges in the campaign addressed the candidates' courage, patriotism, religion, race, morality, mental health, as well as their political viewpoints.

The race between what would turn out to be our second and third presidents, had there been the electronic media of today, would have seemed uncomfortably familiar to us in these United States of America.

On Monday morning, the day before the election, I wrote a prayer for the president elect. I thought that writing it on Monday with he/she throughout the prayer would be a better a more fair prayer than waiting and giving it a slant toward whoever would win. So now I invite you to join me in a prayer for the president elect of the United States of America.

Father we bring before you one whom you know more intimately than we. To be voted to be the President of the United States of America is undoubtedly a heady experience, so our first request is that you give our leader a spirit of humility. May he recognize that while he may love his own way and his own choices and ideas and ways of thinking, that now he has a responsibility to let You have your way with him.

We pray that you will add to his humility wisdom. When our decisions only affect a handful of people they are significant, but decisions at this level effect whole nations of people, our own and others around the world. So let the focus turn to you, and even if that doesn't happen, please guide and convict our leader to make wise decisions.

Marked with humility to be dependent on You and clarity that the fear of You is the beginning of wisdom, we pray for you to make him courageous. In positions of leadership where all sides of an issue may not be able to be known, give courage to move forward, courage to face misunderstanding and ridicule as well as deserved and undeserved praise.

Father, as he assumes this major leadership role, infuse him with your Holy Spirit that he might do the right thing, with a sense that he has arrived in this position for just such a time as this. We surrender our nation's president elect and ourselves to you, trusting your power to work all things to your eternal ends. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen

*E Pluribus Unum* was considered a *de facto* motto of the United States until 1956 when congress passed an act making the official motto "In God We Trust." It was push back to the communist atheism so feared.

But, for nearly 200 years the working motto had been E Pluribus Unum, do recall it's meaning?

“Out of the many one”

This phrase reflects and embraces the greatness of our country. Out of many states, peoples, races, religions, languages and ancestries, one nation- the United States of America!

An American is not a matter of race or station. One author writes: “He may be a Greek sponge diver from Tarpon Springs; a Norwegian dairy farmer from Dakota; an Irish policeman in Boston; a Russian Jew in New York City; an Iranian shop keeper; a Buddhist therapist in California; a Chinese San Francisco software developer. He may be a Colonel Carter of Cartersville, an Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, a General Lee of Virginia or a Henry Ford of Detroit.

This country is made up of people who came here or were later born here who want to break loose from the trammels of an old society and to find the chance to be themselves and unhindered, go as far as God gave them the ability to go. And in that going, E Pluribus Unum. Out of the many one. And even after the pain of the election culminates in one winner and one loser, we choose E Pluribus Unum—out of the many one. We seek in our great diversity the unity of liberty.

Elections are painful because in the end someone has to loose and while everybody loves to win nobody likes to lose!

This may be why I hate spelling bees and musical chairs in both cases it is hard to think of others as better than yourself it the midst of that game or test! It is hard to follow the Bible’s counsel, “Look not only to your own interests but also to the interest of others,” when you’re shoving your friend aside as you dive for that chair when the music stops.

As we move forward as a nation, as we seek national unity, the coming together of winners and losers, it would be great if there was a model from the church of how to come to unity.

The night when Jesus was betrayed, Thursday evening before the day of his crucifixion Jesus prayed for his disciples, the ones present with him and all those who would become disciples. Three times in that prayer recorded in John 17 in verses, 11,21,&22 he prays that they, his followers all might be one like he and the Father, brought into complete unity. E Pluribus Unum out of the many one.

That hasn't worked out so well. There were 1600 denominations of Christianity in 1900 and today the estimates are 43,000. Lots of division and not much of an answer to Jesus' prayer.

Often times when we use the word "church", by our manner of use, we shrink its meaning.

When we say church what do we mean?

- I'm going to church today
- I'm part of a church
- Our church did so and so
- Our church believes
- Our church has hospitals and schools around the globe
- I belong to the church

What do you mean when you use this word "church?"

The whole concept of church, the doctrine of "The Church" is important enough to have made our denomination's list of fundamental beliefs.

Here is how our denomination (often unfortunately referred to as "the church") defines church:

The church is **the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.**

This is a pretty big and inclusive definition: It is what many call the universal body of Christ, or some call it the invisible church. At times, like our present denominational crisis, it is important to remember that the church, even as our denomination defines it, is larger, broader, more than our tribe.

We can represent the church, the body of Christ, all the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior by a large all-encompassing circle.

Within that large all-encompassing circle there are other, smaller circles, of varying sizes. And we tend to call these smaller circles the church. But it is only so because it exists within the larger circle.

Each of these has belief systems, doctrines, cultures and practices which may be unique to them and they seek to rally their troops under their battle flag but there must be some place of unity since we are all part of the larger body of Christ.

Risk comes when any of the smaller circles begin to believe or act or teach that they alone are the larger circle.

But where is the unity

For the reformers the authority did not lie in hierarchical levels of church governance, but in the Word of God—in the Bible.

There has been a lot of discussions in many circles about authority and unity. What is our unity's source? About what is the church called to be in unity?

Where isn't unity necessary?

- Methodology
- Structure
- Culture

- Nationalism
- Political Party

Where can there be Unity and where can there be diversity?

UNITY – Same Faith, Same bond of Love, Same Glorious outlook of future.

The CHURCH isn't controlled or directed or led or managed by humans. Who is the head of the church? Who's body is the church?

What makes you part of the church? How did you get in?

Depends on what church you are referencing?

Invisible Body of Christ – this is the MOST IMPORTANT

Titus 3:4-7

**3** Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled by others and became slaves to many wicked desires and evil pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated others and they hated us.

**4** But then God our Savior showed us his kindness and love.

**5** He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit.

**6** He generously poured out the Spirit upon us because of what Jesus Christ our Savior did.

**7** He declared us not guilty because of his great kindness. And now we know that we will inherit eternal life.”

How do you get in? God gets you in and we simply accept what God has done is doing and will do. Who God is the one who loves us and wants us with him.

How do we get into a local church? Once we have become part of the capital “C” church we then get voted into a local body of believers.

We have some level of agreement on what the body of believers teaches about God and its understanding of Biblical teachings.

But where’s the unity?

Is it on full alignment of the fundamental beliefs?

Is it on coming into line with all policy and procedures of the denomination?

Is it in attending a denominational school?

Is it in loyalty to leadership?

Is it in adherence to various practices, and customs?

Is it in a shared SS lesson globally?

Our unity is in Jesus.

Some of you are fearful by votes take in denominational meetings and what it all means for the future of the church, but by church lets be clear we are talking denomination.

Jesus said that the truth of Peter’s confession in Matthew 16:16 that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God, is the rock on which Jesus would build his church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Today we can be in unity with every other follower of Christ every other part of the universal body of Christ on three points.

Same faith—Faith in Jesus Christ as Savior

Same bond—We are to love one another

Same glorious future—Heaven and eternity with God.

And when we the Body of Christ walk in this unity we can be an asset to our nation to practice E Pluribus Unum and walk in one accord, one nation under God with liberty and justice for all.

Father, in this very room, among this local body of your children, are at least two very different groups. Some are sure that the events of this week mean our nation is doomed and others are equally sure our nation now has chance to blossom and be healthy. Regardless of where each of us stands individually we are still and hope to always continue to be “one nation under you!” Right now we need to hear again the words of your son Jesus Christ when he said, “Love your enemies, do good to those who persecute you, pray for one another.” Father, teach us how to see one another from different backgrounds, with different ethnicities, with widely different ideologies, different expectations of government’s role in our lives, different theology, teach us how to see this kaleidoscope of people as our nation’s greatest asset and to believe that our shared life can benefit us all.

Please heal our nation of division and discord. We like to feel safe, but remind us of the superior value of being and feeling free. Father you have uniquely positioned our country as the protector of freedom and human rights, teach us the respect we need for those who see things differently that we might fulfill your dream for our nation, one nation under you. That we might be part of ensuring justice for all our citizens and the stranger within our gate, and of ending injustice wherever it may arise. We surrender. We surrender our pride of opinion, our self-assurance of being right, and all our fears because we know that you are our supreme God, Lord of all heaven and earth and we trust you, Amen



How have you coped with all the election coverage for the past year?

How do you think we as a nation should go forward now?

What are issues facing us that are most troubling for you?

Where do you see intersections of Biblical truth and culture?

In the wake of the election what's mean to pray for enemies?

What is the strength in E Pluribus Unum?

How can the "Church" be a model for unity?

How can diversity of the "Church" be part of its strength in this culture?

What are ways you can be a bridge builder and unifier rather than being divisive?

What can you do to help end injustice?

How do you like unity in: Jesus is Savior, Love People, Glorious Future!



Join the conversation at @FloridaHC #fhcTAKEAWAY  
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