

Peacemakers are needed in a world of uncivility

In September 2015, I submitted my first Interfaith Voices article to the newspaper.

I wrote on "Civility" and included this paragraph: "A year from now we will be entering into the final stretch of a presidential election. Elections don't tend to represent hallmarks of civility, but we can still exercise a respect for others in our personal conversations, writings and postings about candidates and issues, even if we disagree."



ALICE RAMPTON

It's now 2023, and unfortunately the lack of civility has continued to spiral out of control.

Polarization has spread beyond politics into a lack of courtesy in grocery stores, on the highway, on airplanes and within school boards, and has even divided families.

Gordon B. Hinckley (1910-2008), the 15th president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, shared that civility is the root of civilization. "It carries with it the essence of courtesy, politeness and consideration of others. All of the education and accomplishments in the world will not count for much unless they are accompanied by marks of gentility, of respect for others, of going the extra mile, of serving as a Good Samaritan."

I remember when two local state legislators, Democratic Sen. Clifford Trow and Republican

ABOUT INTERFAITH VOICES

The weekly "Interfaith Voices" column includes a regular rotation of writers representing the broad spectrum of spiritual voices throughout the mid-valley. The column is coordinated by the Reverend Barbara Nixon, who can be emailed at revbabs2000@gmail.com.

Rep. Tony Van Vliet, worked across the aisle on legislation. They were also friends and respected one another. In the 1990s, former Republican U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith and current Democrat U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden traveled across Oregon together, speaking at town halls, modeling civil dialogue.

These leaders give us examples of peacemaking.

Civility can permeate our society, but this requires peacemakers. The current Prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is Russell M. Nelson. One of his significant messages to the world calls for peacemakers.

He minced no words when he recently stated, "Now is the time to cease insisting that it is your way or no way. Now is the time to stop doing things that make others walk on eggshells for fear of upsetting you. If your verbal arsenal is filled with insults and accusations, now is the time to put them away. ... Anger never persuades. Hostility builds no one. Contention never leads to inspired solutions ..."

"I am greatly concerned that so many people seem to believe that it is completely acceptable to condemn, malign, and vilify anyone who does not agree with them. ... Contention is a

choice. Peacemaking is a choice. You have your agency to choose contention or reconciliation. ... I bless you to replace belligerence with beseeching, animosity with understanding, and contention with peace."

He encourages us to speak with love, avoid competition or thinking we know best, gently defend our positions, be led by the spirit in conversations, and fill our souls with the pure love of Christ. Though Jesus Christ had every reason to feel maligned, he turned the other cheek, taught the importance of loving neighbors, and treated all as children of a loving God.

We each have flaws. Perhaps we can consider whether our outbursts and anger are rooted in our personal inadequacies and disappointments.

Peacemaking does not require agreement or

reaching the same conclusions. The U.S. Constitution survived the oft-embattled Constitutional Convention and was finally ratified when radically different delegates listened, reasoned, and compromised.

Though we may not be elected officials with an aisle designating political persuasion, we are community members, neighborhoods and families struggling with our own barriers. It may be language, culture, religion, politics or relationships.

How, as an individual, can each of us be a peacemaker with a focus on building bridges rather than walls of contention? Civility might be the first step in that direction.

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