

Deacon Message March

Politics and Faith

By Mary B. O'Neill

Wherever you are on the political spectrum, you can't help but be exhausted by the rancor, disrespect, and lack of civility on all sides. Each day we deal with new uncertainties, new battle lines being drawn, and increased fear of the unknown.

Yet, strangely the divisiveness of the political world has had an effect on my faith life—a good one. While I'm still unsure of the depth of my faith, I am deeply committed to Christian values and virtues.

When Pastor Diane ends her sermons, as she so often does, with exhortations to go out and live our faith, rather than merely reflect upon it—that I can do. And, of late, that's what I've been trying to do—with more intention and more regularity.

Here's what I mean.

- **Listening-** I'm more focused in my conversations, and I try to have more conversations about what matters
- **Gratitude-** I'm seeking more ways to be grateful for the blessings that I have today--family, work, health insurance, a bed to sleep in, this church
- **Choosing my words-** I'm more careful with what I say and the tone in which I say it. I'm thinking more about the content of my messages and how they might be received. I'm trying to do what Kathy Voldstad recommends in mindfulness meditation: **STOP** (Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed)
- **Nature-** I'm spending more time in the healing presence of nature—it reduces stress and uplifts my spirit
- **Seeking diversity-** I'm trying to seek out people who are different and listen to their stories
- **Power of one-** I have the power to make my world a better place—even in small ways
- **Letting go-** I'm more aware of drawing a line between what I can control and what I can't
- **Service-** I'm looking for ways that I can serve--being a Deacon has given me that chance
- **Faith-** I'm exploring my fledging faith in new ways—really trying to understand where faith meets practice

As Pastor Diane stated recently, it's much harder to be kind than to be unkind. We're all in this earthly world together. We have the chance to rise to the challenge of kindness—and the power to do it is within our grasp.