

“The Fasting of Different Kind”

by Andrew Gardner

As members of the Alliance of Baptists, we are used to watching elections and votes go the other way. Throughout the 1980s, year after year Alliance folks watched a fundamentalist coalition within the Southern Baptist Convention systematically elect denominational presidents committed to packing denominational agency boards with conservative voices. In the 1990s and 2000s, Alliance folks watched regional associations democratically decide to expel their congregations over the inclusion of LGBTQ individuals. We are familiar with watching democratic processes render us into the minority.

Even so, we value the voice of the individual. Baptists have long championed a democratic or congregational polity that recognizes all of God's people have a voice within the larger body of Christ. For many Baptists, this belief is translated into polity through voting and electoral processes at congregational and denominational meetings.

As members of the Alliance, however, we know that a democratic or congregational polity has the capacity to be turned into a political weapon in which electoral winners bully electoral losers. For too long, the political parties in the United States have thought in these terms, practicing a for-profit-politics that turns a blind eye to injustice and oppression.

Yesterday, we participated in the United States' electoral process, and today we continue to live in the uncertainty of the future of our country. The President's premature declaration of victory undermines the values upon which our country was founded. Many ballots have yet to be counted, and they must be counted.

Free and fair elections are not only critical to the stability of our nation, they are critical to our pursuit of justice—to our pursuit of yet still a more perfect union. Now is not the time to shrink back in confusion or frustration, but rather a time to raise our voices like a trumpet to ensure that every ballot—every voice—is counted. We cannot hold back.

Should the President win re-election, this would be the second election in four years where the Presidential candidate failed to win the popular vote but secured an electoral college victory and the third time in twenty years. It is time for us to reevaluate the country's democratic process. The Alliance of Baptists, too, recognized the need to reevaluate their democratic process when the body adopted a consensus model of decision making within the last decade to avoid allowing divisive voting procedures. We must be voices of change in a system that allows an electoral minority to rule over an electoral majority.

And while we keep our eyes on the electoral process and the counting of ballots, we must remember that the election of either candidate is not the end of our work. Yes, we as members of the Alliance have chosen the fasting of a different kind. Ours is a fasting that calls us to confront bonds of injustice among us so that we might loose them; so that we might undo them; so that we might break them. Yesterday's election has not changed the reality that the hungry among us still do not have enough bread. Those with homes have not yet advocated enough with the homeless poor among us to receive just housing. The naked among us are not yet fully clothed. The needs of the afflicted among us have not yet been satisfied.

While God remains ever present, history shows that nations rise and fall. We decry widespread violence perpetrated against anyone and hold that peace and justice are the only avenues toward building an inclusive democracy. It is incumbent upon us to fight for another possibility—for election results that we can have confidence in and a United States that values the voices of each and every one of its citizens.

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