

We could use more friends

The paralysis of both Congress and state legislatures to do anything positive in regards to mass shootings is discouraging. It leaves us asking a depressing question: How many more children will have to die before we do something about it? Apparently a lot more.

A number of conflicts in the last half-century have ended by weary attrition instead of victory. The Protestant and Catholic conflict in Northern Ireland came to a cease-fire because people were weary from funerals. But it took several decades of death to make them weary. The Iran and Iraq war, before the U.S.A. got involved with the Gulf War in protection of Kuwait, ended in a stalemate because both sides had slaughtered as many soldiers as they could stomach. Our armed forces left Vietnam for essentially the same reason.

Is that how this culture war will end? We will finally become weary of funerals, decide political victories are no longer worth it and come to our senses? How many years of funerals will that take?

More coalitions could cut that time. The more groups of people from different backgrounds and different political views come together the more likely politicians will start moving. March for our Lives (<https://marchforourlives.com>), a new group started since the mass shooting in Florida, is coordinating a march in Washington and many other communities on March 24th. Those looking to join a more seasoned group may want to review Moms Demand Action (<https://momsdemandaction.org>).

In our increasingly fragmented, diverse, multi-cultural nation, coalition building will be an art form that gets things done. The truth is that we need more friends, which means that we will have to compromise on some things to come together to get what we want done. Or we can agree to disagree on some areas—leaving those aside—in order to achieve a common goal.

This has me also thinking about the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's new hiring policy and its accompanying Illumination Project, which opened the hiring of LGBTQ persons to some CBF positions, but not to all positions. Texas and Virginia Baptists will no longer channel money to CBF, because any movement towards being inclusive of gay, lesbian and transgender persons is unacceptable to them. Conversely, congregations that feel CBF did not go far enough in opening hiring of LGBTQ persons are considering leaving. Congregations and denominational bodies will continue to make choices that are best for them—that's been the Baptist way for centuries. If those choices leave them more isolated, however, they may weaken their future impact.

One way to stand on principle without becoming isolated may be found in having multiple partnerships with Baptist bodies, which allows a congregation to participate in a number of coalitions that are just not possible by aligning with just one denominational body. My congregation will probably not change their affiliation with CBF because we do not look to CBF for moral or theological guidance. We partner with the Alliance of Baptists and the Baptist Peace Fellowship for those reasons, among others. While I am saddened CBF's new policy is not more inclusive, it does not negate other good things they do. And since the Alliance expresses my congregation's inclusivity for us, we do not have to have CBF do everything the Alliance does for us.

Perhaps churches that are only affiliated with CBF might have more patience with them if they had other partnerships to fully express the life of their congregation. We could all use a few more friends these days.

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