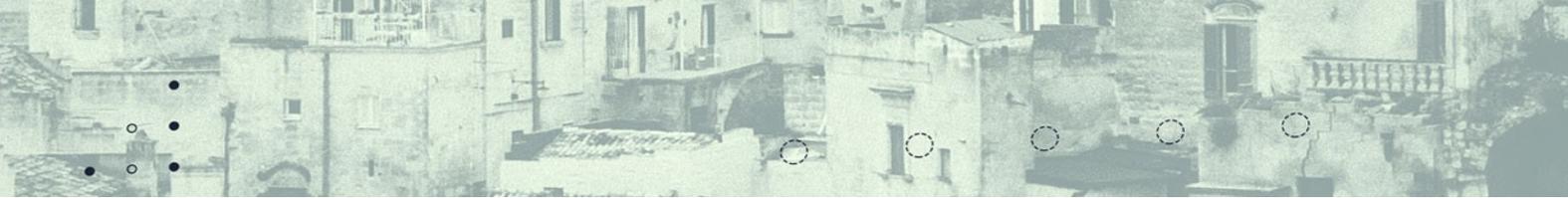




# Faith

*Its not just about your soul*



NAYIRI KARJIAN, GENERAL MINISTER, LIVING WATER ASSOCIATION, OHIO NORTHEAST, UCC | SEP 17, 2020

The Bible, although a faith story, is very much a political narrative. As the story of a tribal people called the Hebrews it narrates their lives and struggles throughout history, including times of foreign empires and ruling powers and therefore, politics. The Biblical story is about life, hence its populated with peasants and royals, men and women, slaves and slave holders, refugees and foreigners, asylum seekers and tax collectors, the wealthy and the poor, and more.

The Hebrews themselves were oppressed foreigners in Egypt, exiled aliens in Babylon, and an exploited “minority” under Roman occupation. They had to comply with the Roman demand for a census, a political act to count the people and gather information in order to determine who should pay taxes, and who should fight in the army.

Jesus himself was a refugee, an asylum seeker, fleeing Herod’s wrath. And of course how can we forget the death of Jesus with Capital punishment in the Roman mode of the cross? What can be more political than an executed capital punishment preceded by a public court presided by a governor of the ruling empire?

We cannot rid the Bible of politics even if we tried. The Bible includes tax and war, money and power, governors and politician. For, politics is just part of life, the way we live in this world, in states that are governed by politicians. That does not make politics evil or a bad word. Politics is simply running the affairs of the state and it does not have to be divisive. What makes politics divisive is not politics itself but partisanship. I am grateful to a wise friend who made this distinction for me.

It is partisanship that divides us into “us and them” as we separate ourselves into parties that increasingly are at odds, forgetting the fact that we, as a people are one nation no matter our political persuasion.

It seems to me that many of us, even as a people of faith think that faith is private, its only about “my soul,” and God is not interested in anything but our souls and spiritual lives. This perspective is not only skewed, it also ignores Jesus who related to politicians and tax collectors, who spoke truth to power, taught reconciliation, healed brokenness, and stood always with the outcast and the oppressed.

Faith is not only about your soul, faith is also about the soul of the world, the healing of the earth and the restoration of all creation, the whole universe, all life. Yes, faith is about going into your heart to nurture grace and compassion, to connect with the Sacred, so that you can go out to live a life of grace and compassion, reaching beyond yourself. Faith is not only about what’s going on in your soul, it is about how you are living your life. And life includes politics.

Many of us, people of faith seem to be uncomfortable with politics often because we don’t want to lose our comfort. We can pretend that poverty and racism, inequality and prejudice, violence and abuse do not exist. Yet, listening to the God who is still speaking, even through the Scriptures, opening our eyes to he lives of our neighbors who are struggling, we cannot but recognize Jesus in them, and perhaps awaken to the fact that government and politics really do matter especially to them. So, Don’t forget to VOTE!