A Winning Approach

Next month our country will have another Presidential election and regardless of who wins, and particularly if it’s close --- a substantial number of people will be disappointed and be vocally opposed to the winner on general principles. The closer the result, the more difficulty the winner will have in bringing unity to the country. However, if the margin between the winner and loser is significantly larger, most people although they voted for the loser, will respect the democratic “voice of the majority”. Close elections create negativity and disunity.

It’s no different in our congregations except we can choose to accept or reject the majority vote regardless of the numbers or if it’s too close, we can choose to wait until we have an opportunity to help some of the congregation “buy into” the idea.

This fact was brought back to me recently in a congregation with whom I have worked had a vote on building a new sanctuary and remodeling the old sanctuary into a Fellowship Hall. I congratulated the pastor when he told me the measure had passed at the congregational meeting and said, “was the vote in favor large enough to give you a mandate to build?” “Well”, he said, “In my book, a win is a win and we can move forward and build. The vote was 52% in favor --- I feel good about that!” I grimaced inside and said to myself, “yes, and 48% of the people voted against it --- that’s a problem!” I said to him, “Are you comfortable with that thin a majority, it means you have a lot of work to do in changing minds before you begin a Capital Campaign.”

“Unfortunately”, he said, “there are some people in our congregation that are against anything that costs money, I don’t care how much we talk ---- they just won’t change!”

“Well”, I wish you luck, but remember you have to go slowly here and hold some small group meetings and seminars to try to give them the reasons for moving forward and benefit the congregation. Listen for the reasons they are in opposition and see if there is some common ground where you can make slight changes that bring them on board. Don’t ramrod it through --- you will pay dearly for it in the future!”

He agreed and they moved the Capital Campaign back three months and proceeded to hold small group meetings and converted many who were opposed. He called me and said, “you were right, we are now in much better shape to complete the project and if we held another vote today, I’m sure it would be over 70% in favor!”

When you are preparing to make a presentation asking for change, regardless if it’s even for the church council, a church team or the entire congregation, hold some “listening sessions” to find the level for support or opposition. Then make your presentation covering all the questions with answers to the negative opinions.

A win only takes place when a solid majority agree --- that’s the secret to team building --- and that’s just good stewardship!