

MAYOR'S CORNER

A BLOG BY MAYOR JAMES D. STEWART, JR.

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FINDING LOVE IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTION SEASON

The second time I ran for Mayor, I learned a harsh lesson about politics. The campaign had nothing to do with qualifications, experience, or vision for our city. Instead, my opponent launched a relentless smear campaign, choosing character assassination over honest debate. After two decades of witnessing the ebb and flow of political seasons, that experience crystallized a question that grows more urgent each election cycle: Can we find—and exhibit—love during election season?

Too often, desperation creeps into campaigns. Some candidates resort to lies, distort facts, or consistently regurgitate erroneous information, believing these tactics will secure victory. But what if we chose a different path? What if individual candidates showed love towards one another, reminding our community that hate has no home in the election process?

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. defined love as “understanding, redeeming goodwill for all men... the force capable of transforming individuals and society.” If we demonstrate love during the political process, we will stick to the facts and refrain from creating fiction. This transformative power of honest discourse seems especially needed now. As Scripture reminds us, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it,” (Proverbs 4:23).

I often wonder: why do insecure people try to defame self-assured individuals to make themselves look bigger? When people lack accomplishments, they often feel that tearing down others helps them feel better about themselves. Perhaps they have forgotten that in a democracy, we are all supposed to grow together. Authentic leadership does not require destroying others; it requires building others up. People should run on their record or campaign slogan and let the people decide. I am reminded of a familiar phrase that has guided my journey: let the work I have done speak for me.



When campaigns turn ugly, I think of the old hymn: “Love lifted me when nothing else could help, love lifted me.” We need this lifting now because we are all in the same city. When you throw a hand grenade to destroy me, you are also ruining yourself and the community as a whole. The wounds we inflict during campaigns do not disappear on election night; they linger, dividing neighbors who must continue to live and work together.

After twenty years of observing this process, I challenge voters to ask not just “What will you do?” but “How will you treat your opponents while doing it?” We deserve candidates who understand that the most significant victory is not winning an election—it is elevating the entire democratic process through love, truth, and mutual respect.

Let our work speak for us all. What are your thoughts?



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