

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

Band inspires unity to face hard times

It was good to see a big crowd for the U.S. Army Field Band and Soldiers Chorus, and it felt good to be patriotic just after the election of a new president.

We certainly enjoy these concerts and know that without the help of the sponsors, it would not happen.

This is not the first concert here by the Army Field Band. The conductor said the band had been in this area about 50 years ago.

The great music was a wonderful reminder of the freedoms we enjoy in America, and a great tribute to all those who have served and are serving in the armed forces.

Days before the concert, we watched as the country went through the process of electing its 44th president. The historic choice of Barack Obama, who traces his ancestry on his mother's side to Kansas, made us proud.

We elected a black man to the highest office in the land, and it was a great day to watch the people of all colors and generations celebrating. Every time we go through the lengthy and tumultuous process to change our government, it is a wonder to many around the world that we can do it in such a peaceful manner and then come together to face the issues of the future.

As we paused on Veteran's Day to honor those who are serving and those who have served our country, we hope everyone said a prayer for all those who were elected last week. It is the armed forces that protect our freedoms, but it's to the elected representatives to whom we entrust the job of supporting our troops in the task of preserving those freedoms.

We stood together as the Army Field Band played "Stars and Stripes Forever" and an encore of "God Bless the U.S.A."

Let's take that spirit and reach for the unity we need as a country to get through these hard times. We should know that the American spirit will help us succeed in the future.

— Tom Betz, *The Goodland Star-News*

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How are we to treat aliens?

I try to listen to the readings in church, at least when I'm not nodding off.

Actually, because I'm a lousy oral learner, I follow along in the book or handout, because if I can't read something, there's little chance I'll remember it. I learned that in college.

And I try and save the nap for the second half of the sermon.

The other day, my ears perked up, because I thought maybe the Lord had been talking directly to Americans of the 21st century, and not just to the wandering tribes of Israel.

Here is the text, from Exodus Chapter 22, verse 20:

Thus says the Lord: "You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens in the land of Egypt."

People like to debate the meaning of scriptures, and a lot of the Bible may be open to some interpretation. Some things are pretty clear, though, and this passage seems to me to be one of them.

Someone will say it only applies to legal aliens, but I doubt it. It's a pretty simple sentence, no qualifiers or modifiers attached.

Another scholar will claim the Lord was just talking about the way things were back in ancient times, when the Jews were wandering in the wilderness, looking for the promised land.

Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

Maybe, but again, I'm pretty sure He doesn't work that way. When he gives clear instructions, shouldn't we listen?

Does He mean we should welcome one and all into our country? Legal or illegal? Rich or poor? Working or not?

Here I cannot say with such certainty. What does oppress mean?

Does it mean keeping out those who want to come here and share our riches?

Does it mean only immigrants who follow our laws?

Does it apply to people with a different skin color or a different religion?

I'll take some guesses.

I think the Lord is talking about anyone who winds up in our country, legal or not, invited or not.

But surely we oppress an immigrant who isn't allowed to work, or to go to school, or to

get decent health care or housing.

I'm not sure it speaks to immigration as such, though I'm pretty sure the Lord will judge those who are not just and caring. That's not my job.

It ought to be our job to build an immigration system and a body of law that works fairly and in reasonable time. In America, we sure haven't done that.

Then, it would be reasonable to say to the prospective immigrant, "follow the law and we welcome you."

For those who sneak in, treatment ought to be fair and humane, no matter what.

Should an employer be allowed to take advantage of immigrants just because they could be sent home on his say-so?

I can't see the Lord buying into that, can you?

I can't see a lot of things about the way immigrants are treated, but there you go.

But I have to say, I think the Lord is a pretty sensible guy.

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of Nor'West Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

New government can't fix our morals

Oh my! Our nation is going to hell in a hand basket! Those godless Democrats are back in power!

How many times have I been asked, "How can you claim to be a Christian and a Democrat at the same time?" Well, folks, it ain't easy!

It is easy being a Democrat. But being Christian takes a continuous effort to deny self and follow Christ's example of care and compassion for my fellow humans.

By the way, the fact that I'm affiliated with the American Baptist Churches of the USA does not indicate I speak with any authority or that I represent my church or fellow Christians in any official capacity. As a matter of fact, my Baptist friends often shake their heads in disbelief over some of my opinions.

I recently read an article in *The Salina Journal*, written by Rose French, that was headlined "Exposing Elephants." That does not refer to the mascot of one of our major political parties. It was referring to the proverbial elephant in the room (or church) that is being ignored.

Yes, we have a lot of the political elephant mascots in the church, just like we have a few of the donkeys. And, just as some of the elephants have to be ignored, a few of those other folks who act like jackasses have to be ignored at times.

Back to the article. It was about the program of Ruth Graham, Dr. Billy Graham's daughter. I don't know anything about the organization, so I will not pass judgment on its merits or agenda. What I had to agree with was the emphasis Ruth Graham had made on addiction, depression, eating disorders, marital infidelity, anger, divorce, loneliness and pornography.

She advocates the need for the church to reach out in ministry, showing love and compassion for people in their midst that suffer, not

Ken Poland

- Ken's World

only from their own failures, but also for their having to deal with spouses, parents and children who are afflicted with these problems.

The patent theology in many of our churches seems to be that if you have these problems, you just aren't spiritual enough. Call on the Holy Spirit and they will disappear. But those who know you have these problems don't forget, nor will they put themselves out to help you.

Many churches that are politically involved have ignored most of these personal problems in favor of attacking homosexuals, same-sex marriage and abortion. They seem to feel that we should elect only those who promise to clean up those issues, and everything else will fall in order. That litmus test is all you need to worry about. The expanded list of all those other sins that are an abomination to God — emotional and psychological problems, along with civil rights issues, the economy, national security, and world relations — will all take care of themselves.

When I listened to Barack Obama's acceptance speech, I couldn't help but notice that he reiterated the issues facing our government and that they were all legitimate issues that were appropriate for civil government to deal with. Civil government in a democracy is answerable to all, regardless of ethnic or religious identity.

He didn't mention all the problems Ruth

Graham listed, or the target of reinstalling God in our institutions and expelling any who don't follow our effort to help God deliver judgment — and excommunication of those whose sexual morals and practices didn't measure up to our standards.

Ruth Graham's list of problems is appropriately and most effectively addressed by our religious institutions and medical science. Religion deals with the heart, the inner emotions and relationships. Medical science deals with the physical conditions like addiction.

Civil government and the church have distinct and separate functions in our society. Let's allow — no, let's demand — they both limit themselves to dealing with their own primary responsibilities and domains.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rwinc@cheerful.com.

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Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

