

February 2000

Pastor-Advisory Board

Rev. Earl Bradley
Capital Region Ministries, Olympia

Rev. Randy Burtis
Luis Palau Crusades

Rev. Mike Fogaras
Gateway Christian Center, Olympia

Rev. Jon Hagebusch
Word of Life, Lynden

Dr. Stephen Hammond
Cornerstone Bible Church, Enumclaw

Rev. Ted Hanson
Abundant Life Fellowship, Bellingham

Rev. Keith Lamm
Yakima Evangelical Church

Dr. Jim Modlish
Faith Baptist, Chehalis

Rev. Scott Montagne
Bayside Community Church, Kingston

Rev. Jon Oletske
Stone Church, Yakima

Rev. Ken Parsley
Church on the Move, Yakima

Rev. Jim Ripley
Neighborhood Christian Cntr, Tumwater

Rev. Reuben Sapien
The Sanctuary Church, Lynnwood

Rev. Dan Sacrist
Faith Assembly of Lacey

Dr. Ken Squires
Marysville First Assembly

Rev. Dwain Wolfe
New Horizons Christian Center, Fife

Board of Directors

Paul Middleton
Chairman, Olympia

Dennis DeFries
Secretary, Olympia

Jim Winterstein
Treasurer, Olympia

Scott Blanton
Vancouver

Dorsey Holt
Shelton

Jere Irwin
Yakima

Peggy Kirk
Montesano

Dick Raport
Camano Island

Jim Robinson
Spokane

Fred Weiss
Bellevue

Rick Forcier
Executive Director

Staff

Sharon Crain
Administrative Assistant

Beth Davis
Accounting

Julie Gallagher
Prayer Coordinator

Rusty Howell
Field Director

Steve Matthews
Field Director

Precinct Caucuses—the Real Story

We have been told we shouldn't believe everything we read in the newspaper. Perhaps it might also be well to say that we shouldn't rush to judgment until we've heard the "rest of the story."

Case in point. Last week, headline news heralded Vice President Al Gore as a big winner over former U.S. Senator Bill Bradley in the Iowa State caucuses. True, as far as the information presented. Pictures of the leading vote-getters in the presidential beauty contest were displayed on the front page of local newspapers with their corresponding share of the caucus votes: Al Gore-61%, Bill Bradley-35%, George W. Bush-41%, Steve Forbes-30%.

However, a cursory look at the actual number of votes cast for each candidate rather than the percentage - calls for a different conclusion to the story. With nearly all Democrat and Republican caucuses reporting in, total attendees numbered 87,358. Following are the number of votes each candidate received:

34,983 George W. Bush
25,857 Steve Forbes
12,268 Alan Keyes
7,247 Gary Bauer

4,045 John McCain
1,257 Al Gore
876 Orin Hatch
732 Bill Bradley

Naturally, it would be tempting to put a different spin on the results of the Iowa caucuses. For instance, a headline might read, "The top five Iowa winners are pro-life," or "Both candidates supporting gay agenda have poor showing." While both statements could certainly be defended, neither would be the real story.

The real story in Iowa is that Republicans did a better job of getting their people to the caucuses than did Democrats—by a margin of 85,276 to 2,082, a factor of 41 to 1.

Like Iowa, Washington is a caucus state. What is a caucus?

According to Webster's New World Dictionary, a "caucus is a social and political club; a private meeting of leaders or a committee of a political party or faction to decide on policy, pick candidates, etc., esp. prior to a general, open meeting."

In our state, the most basic political unit is a neighborhood, also known as a precinct. Each county is divided into a number of precincts based on population and/or geographic considerations. In populated urban areas, a precinct may have 1,000 or more registered voters while a community such as **Stehekin** which can only be reached by boat trip up Lake Chelan, may have fewer than a dozen registered voters in its only precinct.

On Tuesday, March 7th, registered voters representing more than **7,000** precincts in our state will come together for approximately an hour and a half to discuss issues of local and national importance and to elect one or more delegates to represent their neighborhood at a county convention. Some of the precinct meetings will be held in homes - others will convene in nearby schools and churches.

There are several ways to find out where your neighborhood caucus will be held. You can call the county headquarters for the political party you prefer or call your county auditor and ask for the elections division. Give them the name of your precinct (on your voter registration card), or give them your name and address. Also, locations are usually printed in local newspapers a day or two ahead.

Arguably, neighborhood precincts are the headwaters of our entire political system. I have made it a point to attend these every other year events for many years - missing only while I was away in the military during the Vietnam War.

The caucuses, however, became much more meaningful to me after 1971, the year I invited Jesus Christ into my life. Old desires were replaced with the new-- one of them being a desire to be a "fisher" of men. My wife and I soon discovered that neighborhood caucuses provided wonderful opportunities to acquire new friends for Christ while satisfying the least of our civic obligations.

As Christians, political participation should never be considered optional. We are under orders to be salt and light to a culture in desperate need of our help.

That, my friends, should be the real story.

Rick Forcier

Executive Director

"The General hopes and trusts that every officer and man, will endeavor so to live, and act, as becomes a Christian Soldier defending the dearest Rights and Liberties of his country."

--By General Order of George Washington, July 9, 1776