

## **FIRST AND CENTER**

**Pastor's Blog**

**October 16, 2018**

This week marked the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the disestablishment of religion in the State of Connecticut. Until 1818, the Congregational Church was the Established Religion of the state, and tax dollars supported the churches. Church members and clergy had tremendous political power in the state, and there was no real separation between church and state. Legally, that changed in 1818, but it took decades for the power split to follow.

I believe this was a good thing! This country should be a place where people of all religions, and those with no religious affiliation, stand on equal ground. I do not want to be in the position of running the government; the church itself is adequate! And tax dollar support brings all kinds of strings we would rather not have, as well as exploiting those who do not want to support this church.

What this did NOT mean, however, is that church members should no longer be involved in politics. It did NOT mean that church members could not express opinions about what the civil government does. It did NOT mean that church members should not run for office or vote for those who expressed their values. It did NOT mean that our faith is siloed into a church building and does not impact our lives outside, including our political lives.

I truly hope that every member of our church who is eligible to vote is registered and ready for November 6. The church does not tell anyone for whom they should vote, but encourages its members to remember their values, and God's hope for what human society would look like, when they consider which political leaders to support. If anyone needs a ride to the polls on November 6, please contact the church and we will see that you get where you need to go. If you are willing to drive people to their polling place, let me know.

In 1818, the Congregational Church was disestablished, not disempowered. Vote!

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse  
Transitional Minister

