

Guest editorial: Count the “yes” votes in your church

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During a contentious political season when many people find more ways to say “No” than to say “Yes,” it is inevitable for this negative spirit to spill over into congregations. The same people who function as citizens of their nation also function as citizens of the kingdom of God.



George BullardSo, the people of the “No” also are walking among our congregations on Sunday.

Congregations are emotional—as well as spiritual—systems. Consequently, they are susceptible to fearing the negative rather than embracing the positive. One common understanding is that a negative word is more powerful than seven positive words. Thus, a small amount of “No” goes a long way.

Congregational leaders tend to talk about the people who are saying “No” rather than the people who are saying “Yes.” It does not help when congregational leaders also are an anxious presence. It is a common refrain to refer to the “X” number of people saying “No” rather than the “Y” number of people saying “Yes.”

It is a daily challenge to find ways to affirm the positive and build on it. Doing this requires positive, proactive, passionate leadership. Allowing the negative to control permits leaders to say it was not their fault and to point out what they had to endure. This is a cop-out.

Congregational leaders easily allow those who say “No” to hold the entire church hostage. People in Christian ministry naturally allow this to happen. We are rescuers. We bring home wet puppies. We allow the demons within us and the demons around us to set the tone. Although we may downplay a theology of hell, on our worst days, we are afraid we are living out hell or at least hopelessness.

In the midst of this reality, I challenge congregational leaders to count the “yes” votes, shine a light on the “yes” votes and inspire more people to say “yes.” Obviously this is easier to say than it is to do. Yet it is a much better direction than the alternative you may now be experiencing.

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