

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Yesterday, August 18, 2020, marked the 100th Anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Next Wednesday, August 26, 2020, marks 100-years since its formal adoption into the Constitution. The amendment gave women in the United States the right to vote. But there is a reality about this anniversary that at times is ignored--the 100 years represents the time frame in which women who are white have been allowed to vote.

While the amendment did not specifically restrict women from voting based on their color, due to racial injustice and prejudicial attitudes, many women of color were not allowed to vote. Barriers were created, such as voter suppression, polling-place restrictions, literacy tests, and other obstacles that limited women of color (and often men of color) from voting. It was not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965, that women and men of color had the same rights and access to voting when compared to persons who were white. Therefore, for women of color, it may be more accurate to say that this year marks for them, 55 years of voting rights.

There is another number that appeared in the article that I read about the 100th Anniversary (Philip Morgan, "A Century of Women's Suffrage," *Tampa Bay Times*, as reprinted in the *La Crosse Tribune*, August 14, 2020, p. A6). That number is 72. It speaks of the 72 years that women, and some men, publicly spoke up for the rights of women. From 1848-1920 in the United States, there was an organized effort to promote women's suffrage/women's right to vote. The movement began as an outgrowth of the abolitionist movement.

Last Sunday, we heard the pericope about the women who was Canaanite, who spoke up for herself, her child, and her culture. Today, we are reminded of the many women and supportive men, who spoke up for women's right to vote. No longer was it deemed acceptable for women to be told that they had no voice or vote. No longer was it deemed acceptable for women to be told that their husband's or father's vote was their vote. These were suffragettes, advocates, and supporters, who felt that women had the right to not only express their choices regarding political candidates, but to have their choices, their votes, legally count.

No doubt there were many persons who were weary from their years, even lifetimes, of trying to secure the vote for women. No doubt there continue to be many persons who feel the sting of injustice and the devaluing inherent in other forms of inequality. Yet, if we truly believe that all human beings are created in the image of God, we seek to lift people up, rather than to tear them down. And, for that to happen, societal change is often needed. Sometimes the change that is sought will benefit oneself and one's peers, and other times, it will benefit one's children, grandchildren, and/or others who will live in future generations.

What are we doing as a result of the Holy Spirit working within us to promote justice in the world? What are we doing today that will improve the future for others living 100-years from now? We may not yet know, but God knows our hearts and hears our prayers. Let us listen for that still small voice, directing us and leading us in the way we should go. Thanks be to God.

Peace,

Pastor Cathy