



Cultivating Community IN SISTERS

Steve Stratos
Columnist

Whose justice?

As we look back on our country's beginnings, a majority of us would agree, the Declaration of Independence was foundational to the success of our nation. History confirms this consensus, assuring us that abiding by the self-evident truths that "all men are created equal" should help everyone in the pursuit of Life, Liberty, and Happiness.

We organized around these truths to create a just society. Creating a cultural consensus seemed to make sense.

Today we face a consensus problem when it comes to justice. What is fair? How do you define human rights? What is justice? While calling for justice we have many

competing visions of what it should look like and none of these have achieved a cultural consensus. It is not because we don't believe in justice, but we have lost our rationale for it. And we have become logically inconsistent.

Most would still mimic "All men are created equal." But do we really believe that? The statement implies Creator/Designer — and purpose. If you wear a watch and I asked you if it was a good watch, you would say yes if it told accurate time. If you used your watch to hammer nails, you would probably say it wasn't a very good watch. The watch has a purpose created by the designer. When it fulfills its purpose we all smile.

If we too are created/ designed, finding our purpose would begin to provide a rationale for justice. What is good or bad behavior? What are the rules? What consequences should follow? What rewards? How do we create a just society? How do we help everyone to live justly and flourish? Where do we find answers to these questions?

Current justice theories swing from an emphasis on individualism (you are totally the product of your individual choices) to collectivism (you are wholly the product of social forces and structures). Like all theories they have some value, but as extreme standalones they end up creating guillotines and gulags

— confusion and destruction. Similar to the watch being used as a hammer.

If America's justice system seems broken, maybe we need to go back to the watchmaker. All the individual parts, unique and perfect, are designed for a specific purpose. They serve the watchmaker's desire for efficiency, freedom, and harmony. But to achieve this, all the parts must work together for a greater purpose — to tell the right time.

Individualism is a beautiful thing, but it comes with responsibility. Like the inner workings of a watch, we humans need to work together to create harmony for the collective, the community. This is the beginning of justice and human flourishing.

So maybe in going back to the Declaration of Independence, we can find some rationale for true equality and justice — and for what made the American experiment work. Here we will not find a perfect society, but one that started with a good foundation. Let's build on that foundation — not cancel it! Yes, we have work to do! But let's do it purposefully, thoughtfully, lovingly, and justly.

We have a Watchmaker! And every individual part is created perfectly for the right time!

Steve Stratos is the pastor of Sisters Community Church.

High Desert Chorale ready to sing out

Wish for some harmony in your life? It might be time to join the Sisters High Desert Chorale and make some joyful noise. The Chorale is set to begin rehearsals next month for music to bring in the Christmas season.

The Chorale is a community-based group of singers who gather to practice then present concerts in December celebrating the holiday season. Singers of all ages and abilities are welcome to the group. These free concerts resume a Sisters tradition that signals the start of the holiday season for many local residents.

The Chorale has been a longtime hallmark of chorale excellence in a town that embraces art in all its forms. Under the direction of

Connie Gunterman and with accompanist Donna Moyer, the Chorale offers music that celebrates the Christmas season and brings good cheer to all who attend. This year will be especially welcome to our community after quarantines created a "silent night" last year.

Weekly Monday-night practices start September 20 at Sisters Community Church, 1300 McKenzie Hwy., 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Members of the Chorale ask that prospective singers be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Concerts will be held at Sisters Community Church on December 3 and December 5.

For more information contact Connie Gunterman at 541-588-0362.



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