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Nuts & Bolts—Inside the Democratic Party: Making friends with our community churches (/stories/2022/4/10/2090813/-Nuts-amp-Bolts-Inside-the-Democratic-Party-Making-friends-with-our-community-churches)



Christopher Reeves (/users/christopher reeves) for *Daily Kos* (/groups/main)
Daily Kos Staff

2022/04/10 · 17:00

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attribution: Neeta Lind

The Rev. William Barber II speaking at an event for Daily Kos. **There are no unread comments at this time.**

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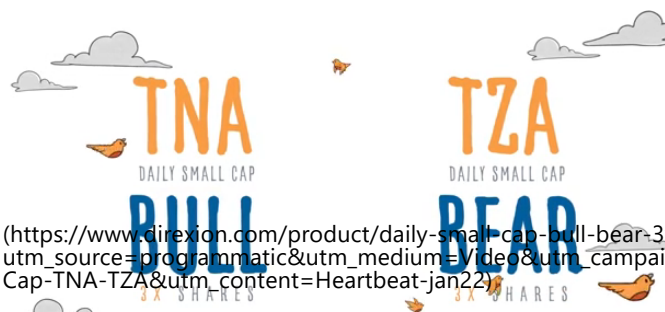
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Welcome back to the weekly Nuts & Bolts Guide (<http://www.dailykos.com/blogs/Nuts%20and%20Bolts>) to small campaigns! If you listened to the GOP, you would believe that Republicans themselves have the sole monopoly on churches. In their eyes, Democratic ideas, families, and candidates are not welcome inside of a church and may find themselves being stoned with rocks upon entrance. What a bunch of nonsense. While there is a clear divide between church and state, the Democratic Party message is the story of the New Testament for Christians in many ways: it is the story of acceptance. Many faiths share similar stories. Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism, as examples, all talk about the good of the community. This common theme is a daily part of the Democratic message: Uplift the poor and the hungry. Feed those in need. Welcome the stranger. Show love to those who need it, and clothe those who are struggling. If I asked how well that message lines up with each party, the difference would be crystal clear. While Republicans talk about “rising socialism (<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/aug/26/big-scary-s-word-socialism-documentary-film>),” I have to wonder what they are talking about. With elected Republicans representing mostly the Christian community, I assume they introduced their children to Christ and his teachings and most of their children learned about the loving, kind God that flipped over the money changers’ tables, opposed profiteering, gave shelter to a sex worker, and told a community they had a responsibility to take care of those in need by welcoming refugees. How does any of this line up with the Republican Party? It doesn’t. So, how do we work to make good friends with our local religious community when running for local office?

AD



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Nuts-amp-Bolts-Inside-the-Democratic-Party-Making-friends-with-our-community-%94Inside+the+Democratic+Party%3A+Making+friends+with+our+community+churches)

Show up

I cannot talk enough about the importance of just showing up. Attend a Mass in a local community church and meet with parishioners afterward. Do some service work within the religious community locally that invites one-on-one conversations about how your beliefs matter to you. Maybe you don't believe everything the church believes, but you do believe in some key things that are meaningful. Are we doing enough to make a better life for everyone in America? Do we help take care of the poor and the sick? Most Christian churches, even lay Christian members, are familiar with Mark 25:

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For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Showing up means a great deal. In the Black Protestant faiths, it often means everything. Pew Research discovered that for 62% of the attendees of Black Protestant churches, having a political message in the homily is important, and for 24% it is "essential (<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/02/16/religion-and-politics/>)." Hearing the message is one thing, but it is more about someone who shows up in the pews and is willing to have that conversation outside of the church that shows the care taken that day.

If you've ever read a book on a good relationship, you know part of the equation is active listening: hearing what is being said, internalizing it, and repeating it back to the original sender. When we do this we acknowledge what is being said and we make the other party feel seen. I'm going to be really honest: I struggle with this. Too often, we think up our response and we just wait for someone else to not talk so we can launch into what we want to say. Showing up is not just a physical place, it is showing up in full with our mind and body, and being an active participant. Don't try to talk over someone else with what you want to say. Listen to what they are saying, relay it back to them with no changes, and wait for them to invite you to discuss what you care about in the conversation. This is how we honor the participants. The smaller your campaign, the more important this tool becomes.

Connect in a way that is meaningful and has a purpose

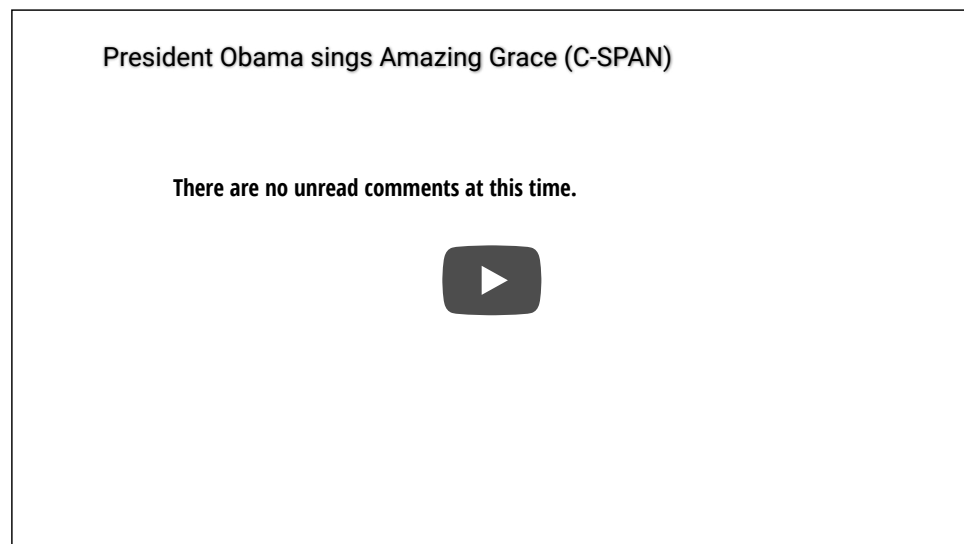
A Democratic candidate once said, within my earshot, that he hoped the nearby Democrats would "slip on a patch of ice and all die" because of the perceived lack of value in the room; they were older and they just wanted to talk. He had better things to do, it seems. This does not work in building a winning campaign. When you connect to a religious audience, you have to do so in a way that is meaningful and that shows

purpose.

If your appearance at these events is only perfunctory and designed to check a box, you will not get much out of them. Campaigns have many different elements that are critically important. Time, Message, and Money are some of the items I focus on with everyone who runs. Time, though, is the one item that is the most important because there is absolutely nothing you can do that gets time back. Making every meeting productive and meaningful matters to help your campaign become successful.

If you are “checked out” of a meeting, you are not helping your campaign because people around you will feel used as props and they can sense the disrespect. Religion can be very important to attendees and treating it like a normal campaign stop will never, ever work.

Go back, however, and watch some of the greatest politicians you know. Here's President Obama singing “Amazing Grace”:



Think about more than the fact that he is singing, and watch the ministers around him, and the feeling that's in that room. There is a connection that says: I honor tradition, and I honor what this means to this community, and I honor the members here. It is all

done within a short period of time. This is a U.S. president utilizing reflective listening and putting more than an appearance back into the community. Instead, he is thoughtfully responding to the emotional state in the room.

It doesn't need to be prompted by a tragedy. It can also be about joy and purpose. Utilizing a church only in times of great need and grieving is just waiting on something terrible. Celebrating joy is an even more powerful tool of connection. Delivering meals on wheels (https://www.wrex.com/news/politics/senator-steve-stadelman-delivers-meals-on-wheels-to-senior-citizens-in-rockford/article_7357d905-20bf-5ec5-8d2d-79de849eed04.html) is one example.

We cannot abandon those who have faith

There are overwhelming numbers of people who practice a faith who are strong Democratic voters. Black Protestant voters. Jewish voters. Catholic voters have favored Democratic candidates in most elections. Not taking the step to connect our beliefs to their faith is a loss on our part and it risks losing generations of work.

Be willing to take the time and the interest to go through this process thoughtfully, intentionally, and get to the result you need in order to be successful. Walking away or deciding before you start not to participate in no way helps your campaign.

This is a short blurb about Daily Kos. Please read it. It's important:

Media outlets shed 28,637 jobs last year alone. That's not just journalists, but fact-checkers, editors, and administrative staff. Advertising dollars have been gobbled up by Big Tech and cash-strapped outlets are being bought and sold to the highest bidder. Daily Kos is different. We don't have corporate backers that are only in it for the bottom line. We are primarily accountable to readers like you because donations from readers like you are our biggest source of income. *Want to keep it that way? Click here to donate \$3 now.*

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Locate Almost Anyone By Entering Their Name (This Is Addicting!)

TruthFinder

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Judeling (/users/judeling)

Apr 10, 2022 at 05:20:29 PM

(/comments/2090813/83337539#comment_83337539)

Show up, show up, show up, become a real person to as many as possible.

Reply 4 Recommend



Parthenia (/users/parthenia)

Apr 10, 2022 at 05:29:42 PM

(/comments/2090813/83337582#comment_83337582)

Amen!

Reply 3 Recommend



Tax Haven (/users/tax haven)

Apr 10, 2022 at 06:10:22 PM

(/comments/2090813/83337787#comment_83337787)

You don't have to be a Christian to applaud Christian values or to ask some eh 'Christians' why they show a distinct lack of Christian values :)

Reply 3 Recommend



kuvasz (/users/kuvasz)

Apr 10, 2022 at 06:50:30 PM

(/comments/2090813/83337998#comment_83337998)

no!

Reply 0 Recommend

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Christopher Reeves (/users/christopher reeves) AUTHOR

► kuvasz

Apr 10, 2022 at 08:10:08 PM

(/comments/2090813/83338425#comment_83338425)

Well, that was... a point.

Reply 0 Recommend

Liberal in a Red State (/users/liberal in a red state)



Apr 10, 2022 at 06:51:40 PM

(/comments/2090813/83338006#comment_83338006)

As an Atheist, I implore any and all Liberal Christians to go on the mission of your life to convert as many people as humanly possible. To go to church and PREACH and find seeds and lambs and bring them to register to vote and then show up and vote.

YES! For the Love of God (who does not exist) if you go to church, you have a crowd and it's time to really work the damn crowd!!!! Go Get Them to Vote Democratic!!!!!! Republicans do this all the time and now our Christians need to step the hell the next level up. Go get em!!! Yes!!!!

Reply 3 Recommend



Parthenia (/users/parthenia)

► Liberal in a Red State

Apr 10, 2022 at 07:11:33 PM

(/comments/2090813/83338127#comment_83338127)

Many Liberal Christians have been trying for a while. And, will continue trying!

Reply 3 Recommend



wesmorgan1 (/users/wesmorgan1)

Apr 10, 2022 at 08:09:53 PM

Placing a marker on this diary...for future reference.

Reply 0 Recommend



Atha Maffei (/users/atha maffei)

Apr 10, 2022 at 08:10:08 PM

(/comments/2090813/83338426#comment_83338426)

Alway amazing.

Reply 0 Recommend

Laurel in CA (/users/laurel in ca)



Apr 10, 2022 at 09:39:27 PM

(/comments/2090813/83338730#comment_83338730)

Our congressman (at least until next January, when he is redistricted away from us), John Garamendi, came to speak to our Friends Meeting (Quakers) a few years ago. He spent several hours answering questions, chatting, telling us about the time he and his wife spent in the Peace Corps, and making it very clear that he shared a lot of core values with Friends. He is on the Armed Services committee and there were some tough questions on how this aligned with the Friends' testimony on peace. He gained a lot of respect for showing up and having a real, serious discussion, not a campaign speech, but people who care about the world listening to each other.

Reply 1 Recommend



TexasTom (/users/texastom)

Apr 10, 2022 at 09:42:17 PM

(/comments/2090813/83338738#comment_83338738)

With elected Republicans representing mostly the Christian community, I assume they introduced their children to Christ and his teachings and most of their children learned about the loving, kind God that flipped over the money changers' tables, opposed profiteering, gave shelter to a sex worker, and told a community they had a responsibility to take care of those in need by welcoming refugees.

Why would they do that? Let's face it — many of those so-called "Christian" churches abandoned any pretense of Christian teachings long before Trump was on the scene. And since he's come along, I'd say that if those churches were to be honest, they'd remove their crosses and replace them with a fake gold "T" to show who they actually worship.

Reply 0 Recommend



blueRange (/users/bluerange)

Apr 11, 2022 at 03:33:38 AM

(/comments/2090813/83339185#comment_83339185)

I don't think visiting churches in such a tangential manner — a ploy — is going to get you far. Feigning empathy is mor disingenuous than an obvious con, which obviously works! And the Christian wrong does not represent all Christians, not even all theologically conservative Christians. (I would aver that

political evangelicalism is not Christian at all — and note, I am a graduate of an evangelical college (some of which are explicitly nonpolitical) and a practicing, professing member of an active nonpolitical, theologically conservative, and socially tolerant church which would find your strategy offensive.)

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