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## *My Advice on How to Counsel "Divided" Households*

**An article for *The Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Rev. Sam Candler, *Dean of the Cathedral*  
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A lot of leaders and speakers keep telling me that my community is “divided.” They keep telling me that even my own household is “divided,” or my country is “divided,” or my world is “divided.” They show up at my dinner table, or in my community forum, offering to speak about how my world is “divided.”

I wish they wouldn’t. To them, I have some counsel. I have some advice to all of us about how to counsel households some describe as “divided.”

My main advice is rather simple: do not begin your presentation by declaring how “divided” this community is. All that does is set the stage for the same show that we see daily on the news shows and television shows and social media feeds. Many media outlets make their money by setting up the “divided” scenario, and then playing to one side or the other. Are you a fan of Team A, or Team B? Once that stage is set, we revert back to our sports competitions. And, no matter what evidence you offer, you will never convince me to stop rooting for my team.

If you are coming into my house, or my classroom, or whatever, surely you realize that each of us in that room already knows what teams are being rooted for in that room. We have already talked to each other! We know each other! We even, usually, love each other.

If we have come to that dinner table, there is something in us that wants to be with those other people, no matter what our other allegiances and favorites are. If you have come to that dinner table in order to be of value, I have a simple suggestion: Appeal to the clear signs of unity that have brought all of us there. Do not set up the “divided” scenario. In fact, I suggest that you do not even use that word. Try to spend the whole meal without using the word, “divided.”

Further, speak the language of the culture around that dinner table. If we are with elementary school children, speak that language! If we are at a family gathering, remember the stories of our ancestors and elders and crazy cousins! If we are at a church dinner, speak that parish language. It is fun! It brings back memories and hopes. That language connects people. That language gives us a different identity from the one the pundits give us.

Obviously, I am speaking about our present national political context, too. I am suggesting, as I have been asked to do dozens of times in the past several years, how to behave in a political context that most declare is “divided.”

This beautiful church I serve is similar to many communities around our country right now. We are full of good people who have different opinions; and we have always been full of those people! If we behave according to how pundits have defined us, if we behave according to how we have been “divided,” then we do not benefit from each other. But if we behave according to how we understand God has defined us, then something else happens.

The church is where we are loved. That is what defines us at church. Yes, sometimes we have some unlovable moments. But God loves us anyway, even in those unlovable moments. And, yes, we do have diverse political positions. But, at our best, the church—and other faith communities—can give the world another model about how to define ourselves. We can help families, and neighborhoods, and even countries, who have been defined too long as “divided.” We can show the world how to be loved, a new kind of identity, a new kind of

community. So, my final advice: participate in your church, your community of faith. Identify yourself in a new way! Be in a community, day in and day out, that has a record of trying to love each other; it is a beautiful language.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler  
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