

What Do You Call Someone Who Wins by 52 Votes?

Thousand Oaks pastor Rob McCoy had been shepherding his Calvary Chapel flock for 13 fruitful years when, in 2014, he was asked to run for the California Assembly. Although he initially responded with “Not doing that,” after weeks of prayer, he announced his run. Almost beyond belief, 650 volunteers converged on the campaign over the next 11 months. Yet, despite their best efforts, pastor McCoy lost the race by 4,000 votes out of a total of 130,000 votes cast.

One year later, pastor McCoy was again asked to run, this time for Thousand Oaks City Council. “No thanks,” he said, “I’m spent.” Undeterred, volunteers drafted their pastor, taking upon themselves much of the heavy lifting in the race.

Among the heavy lifters were a retired policeman knocking on 10,000 doors; a businessman making 12,000 phone calls; and a new citizen from England organizing 150 coffees in homes of residents highly unlikely to ever darken the door of a church.

Pastor McCoy won by 52 votes! “Do you know what they call someone who wins by 52 votes? The winner,” he quipped.

On Dec. 11, 2018, pastor Rob McCoy will be sworn in as mayor of Thousand Oaks. We ask for prayers for Mayor McCoy’s administration and stewardship.

Many serving in pastorates possess similar skills as elected officials, such as “social astuteness, interpersonal influence and networking ability.” Pastoral skills moreover include qualities characteristic of the pastoral calling:

- Exceptionally perceptive/not easily deceived.
- Able to perceive truth and reality efficiently.
- See human nature as it is (Charles Swindoll, *A Man of*

Integrity and Forgiveness: Joseph).

As good shepherds, pastors need such qualities to protect their flock and to keep away false prophets and wolves in sheep's clothing.

Historically, pastor McCoy's campaign for public office was not an isolated incident. All signers of the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution

... were a profoundly intelligent, religious and ethically-minded group. Four of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were current or former full-time preachers, and many more were the sons of clergymen. Other professions held by signers include lawyers, merchants, doctors and educators. These individuals, too, were for the most part active churchgoers and many contributed significantly to their churches both with contributions as well as their service as lay leaders. The signers were members of religious denominations at a rate that was significantly higher than average for the American Colonies during the late 1700s" ("Religious Affiliation of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America,").

Accepting conflict as unavoidable, America's founders could not visualize advancing a single step without opposition of one sort or another (Joseph Boot, *The Mission of God*). Implicitly, somebody's values would reign supreme in the public square. Present-day pastors in America will have to accept this as a daily fact of life if the nation is to survive. Hiding behind the four walls of the church is no longer an option.

Solomon spoke of engagement in the public square as partaking in the blessings of wisdom: "Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice? She stands on the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She cries out

at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entrance of the doors" (Prov. 8:1-3).

"Wisdom takes her stand at the center of social, commercial, and legal activity, where competition is fiercest" (Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs, A New Translation*). Over the last 50 years, however, wisdom's light has been hidden under a bushel, far removed from the central square.

Solomon also assures us that resilience and perseverance are best proven by adversity (see Prov. 24:10). This notion "may be quantitative as well as qualitative. A person reveals the degree and extent of his strength by his conduct in crisis" (Bruce K. Waltke, *Proverbs Commentary*).

"It is when a man is hemmed in and trapped by adverse circumstances that his powers of endurance are stretched and an estimate of his toughness and stamina can be made" (William McKane, *Proverbs*).

Gideons and Rahabs now gearing up to run for local office in 2020-2022 should know that first runs often prove unsuccessful. Newt Gingrich lost his first two races for public office. Candidates accrue political capital over time, that is, name recognition, fundraising structure, organization, volunteers and so forth. Moreover, political parties have established campaign structures that require newcomers to respect the process, earn their stripes and so establish credibility as a team player.

Long-outstanding bills are coming due as America has been stripped of her once biblically based culture. In a letter from California in 1769, Father Junipero Serra issued a warning: "Let those who are to come here as missionaries not imagine that they are coming for any other purpose but to endure hardships for the love of God and for the salvation of souls" ().

Father Serra's sentiment is particularly relevant in light of

the November 2018 election shellacking of conservatives in California.

Chances are that San Francisco “think tank” liberals reveling in their newfound power and dominance in Sacramento will overplay their hand. By possessing a veto-proof Democratic Assembly and Senate, along with Governor-elect Gavin Newsom, America’s most progressive governor, the deck looks stacked, like an unscalable wall.

Those with their spiritual senses intact, however, will perceive that California liberal elites are just breathing their own ether, for “Not very many men can carry a full cup without it disturbing their equilibrium” (Charles Swindoll, *A Man of Integrity and Forgiveness: Joseph*).

Gideons and Rahabs are beginning to stand.

In praise of pastor McCoy.