

DC Church a Model for Breaking Political Gridlock?

From the debt to guns, America seems more divided than united. Now, some are bonding—not in spite of their political differences but because of them.

The bigger surprise might be where this is happening: the nation's capital.

Juliana Heerschap and Aaron Welty are what people in Washington commonly refer to as “staffers.” They work for members of Congress.

But it's their side gig that keeps them going. They lead a community group for the National Community Church in downtown D.C.

“It's caused both of us to grow in our faith and how we interact with folks on Capitol Hill,” Heerschap told CBN News.

Members include political pollsters, administration staff, and other staff from the House and Senate.

“I kind of like to think of that verse in Galatians where it says there's neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. We just throw in Democrat or Republican,” National Community Church's Pastor Mark Batterson said.

On Thursday mornings, they discuss how faith can make a difference where they work, the literal intersection of religion and politics.

But with so much fighting between parties, how can it work?

Barriers are broken through prayer and bonds formed through their shared experience in the workplace.

"We're taking a lot of the politics, policy, and power, and all of those things, dropping that off at the door and saying, 'Who are we as a people? Who is Jesus to us?'" Welty said.

"Staff assistants in this group know what it's like to answer the phones regardless of what side of the aisle their boss is on," Heerschap said.

Their focus: building relationships. Women meet for weekend breakfasts; the men do, too.

"It's gotten to the point now where a lot of us, we're family," Welty told CBN News.

During the campaign, they even watched the presidential debates together, which on one occasion sparked a debate of a different kind.

"Two hours after it was over we were still there talking because two individuals in the small group were totally going at it one-on-one on justice versus mercy and grace," Welty said.

He added, "The two people that were having that debate are still friends today and they tease one another about it."

While they haven't found the key to breaking Washington's gridlock, they hope their small group may provide a clue.

Their pastor believes it's an example, and not only for those in the nation's capital.

"I think it's a reminder, too, that we have a King, and we're part of a kingdom and that is larger than this democracy we live in," Pastor Batterson said.