



Pacific SW District Pastors Conference
Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer
Radisson Ft. McDowell Resort & Casino
Wednesday, September 16, 2009

Thank you, Pastor Spicer.

It is not often that I am introduced by my very own pastor, so allow me to take advantage of this moment to thank Pastor Spicer for the remarkable work that he does, and for those that he enlightens through his leadership at Life in Christ Lutheran Church.

Thank you.

I am honored to be here with you this morning and would like to welcome you all to Arizona.

You probably have heard that Arizona has been sailing through some turbulent financial waters, and we have had very tough choices to make about where to cut agency and department budgets.

Programs are impacted by these cuts. People are impacted. Families are impacted.

Such choices, such decisions, weigh heavily on my shoulders.

And it is at such times as these, that I rely on prayer for courage, hope and guidance.

But, I must also tell you, prayer is not only a part of my life at times of trials -- and crisis -- and tragedy -- but also at times of joy and happiness which have dominated my life, with God's blessing.

Former Republican Senator John Danforth of Missouri captured the essence of religion and politics for me in his book, "Faith and Politics."

I don't think that God can be shrunk in and stuffed into a political agenda, he said.

I think that God transcends our political views and that religion and the Christian faith can accommodate a variety of positions.

Where is the room for compromise, if you say, "I know God's truth, I can translate God's truth into my politics"?

Danforth said – and I agree – that it is important we don't check our religion at the church door; we want it to apply to the rest of our lives.

But the question is: How do we do that? There's a difference between trying to be a faithful person in your politics, on one hand, and having a full-blown political agenda on the other.

The problem with having a political agenda is that we give the impression that we have God's truth.

We think we can convert God's truth into a particular platform, a set of political issues, and that there is God's way in politics.

I don't believe that for a minute. Any more than you believe that God's way is – exclusively -- the Lutheran way.

But, when speaking of the Lutheran way, I must tell you, I have always been deeply inspired by Lutheran Church schools.

Education is my passion.

I know how committed to education the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod is, operating 2,500 schools including a fine Concordia University system.

I am inspired by the difference that Lutheran schools are making in our community.

Your school students test 23% higher than the national average on standard achievement tests.

Average SAT/ACT test scores of students attending Lutheran high schools are well above the national average.

Students in Lutheran schools at every grade level, and especially in middle school and high school, have more developmental assets than students in public schools, according to Search Institute.

Lutheran Schools not only make a difference – they make a difference that matters.

A study of students who attended Lutheran schools indicated that they:

Show more reasonable respect for authority.

Live out stronger tendencies to be forgiving and personally forthright with other people.

Evidence greater avoidance of over-simplistic views (such as viewing complex social issues as more than mere power struggles).

Reveal less tendency to be anxious about life and their faith, and are less swayed by their peers.

The research also proved that the more years a person attended a Lutheran school, the more significant the difference became! In that regard, all of you deserve high praise and thanks for the work you do in supporting these schools.

So making a difference, I suspect, is one calling that brings together many politicians and pastors – though I know that is a frightening thought for some of us.

But, Lutheran or not, here in Arizona, we are fortunate to benefit from a growing population of citizens who still actively participate in service programs and volunteer projects.

As Governor, during these difficult economic times, I can't tell you how important it is that Arizonans – indeed all citizens – continue their efforts to help meet our country's critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment.

Here in Arizona, I am happy to report that we have a large network of 136 national service programs in operation that engage more than 12,000 citizens to serve Arizona communities.

These tough economic times that I spoke about earlier elevate the importance of social responsibility.

And I certainly don't have to tell all of you that service and volunteerism are essential to the true spirit of community and helping your fellow neighbor.

In our state, 23.9 percent of our residents volunteer in some capacity – many of them in programs involving tutoring, fundraising, collecting and distributing food and general labor.

Arizona's volunteers are coming together to serve, and, in so doing, are building stronger families -- and stronger communities.

We are, after all, always guided by the words of Hebrews 13:16 -- "Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices, God is pleased."

Of course, there is still more that we can do.
And, we will do more, with God's good guidance and help.

Many of you may know that I didn't originally seek the office of Governor, and that I inherited many significant challenges that still confront Arizona citizens today.

As with past challenges, tragedies, or problems I've had to confront,... I first and foremost rely on my faith to guide me through.

For, I believe in the power of prayer.

And I firmly believe that God has placed me in this powerful position of Arizona's Governor to help guide our State through the difficulty we all currently face together.

I remain confident that Arizona – indeed all of America – will make it through these difficult times and that brighter horizons are just ahead.

And I have undoubting faith that our hopes and prayers will be answered quite soon.

May God bless you, and your ministries, and guide you safely home when your conference ends.
Thank you.