

Over the Back Fence
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Approx 620 words

Politics and religion
By Alva Wood

Reverend Sid Carter caught herself getting more and more angry as she listened to the television coverage of the American political conventions.

It wasn't so much what the politicians said, as what the commentators said about them.

In fact, the Democratic convention had so many commentators describing every nuance of what the various speakers did or didn't say that there wasn't any time left to hear what the speakers themselves were saying. Instead, all she got was replays of the highlights of the speeches, surrounded by wall-to-wall analysis.

Sid thought she might as well be watching the Superbowl. And she hates football.

But it was the news clips from sermons by televangelists that really got her riled up.

"In the time of Noah," one man ranted, "Gaahd sent rain for forty days as a sign of His Deevine Displeasure. If the Democratic Convention gets rained out, Ah would tayke thet as a sign that Gaahd is greevously displeazed with Barrack bin Osama..."

But of course, the Democratic Convention didn't get rained out. The Republican Convention did. Not in Minnesota, of course. In Noo Orleans, where Hurricane Gustav blew in to express Gaahd's displeasure with an administration that still hadn't fully mismanaged to repair the damage from Hurricane Katrina three years before.

Even Head Honcho George Doubleyoo Bush skipped the Republican Party's big bash so that he could go to New Orleans to watch the city get evacuated.

"This is ridiculous!" Sid screamed at her TV screen. "Why don't they put on a video clip of some right-wing nutcase assuring the nation that Gustav is a sign of God's judgement on the Republican Party?"

The face on the screen didn't answer, of course. It just kept right on analysing what John McCain had or hadn't said.

Sid decided that the subject deserved a sermon.

She hit the congregation with it on Sunday morning.

"Apparently," she told them, "it is only a 'sign from Gaahd' if it supports your own prejudices," she said, "but if it doesn't, then it is merely," she added sarcastically, "what insurance companies call 'an act of God,' an accident of nature that no one can be held responsible for."

"The American Right," she plowed on, "has domesticated God. They trot their well-trained puppy out," she charged, "any time they need to keep people in line. God does what they tell her to do, and then they put God back in her kennel until the next time they need her to perform."

"It's time we realized," she finished with a flourish, "that God is not a pawn on a political chessboard!"

Then she sat down, feeling rather pleased with her chessboard analogy.

As usual, most of the people heading home had some comment to make about whatever they remembered from her sermon.

"That was an unfair crack at the insurance companies," said Deirdre Pollacks. She runs our village's only insurance agency.

"I appreciated your use of the feminine pronoun for God," said Aynsley Kastor. Pretty well everyone figures Deirdre and Aynsley are a lesbian couple.

"I think you must be wrong about God being a pawn," said Tessa Vanderkam. "God would have to be at least a bishop, wouldn't he?"

"Should be the King," suggested Jake Bowers, the next person in line. "But the Queen might be more appropriate, able to move any distance in any direction." Jake loves philosophical conundrums.

"The church shouldn't meddle in politics," Ollie Armitage reprimanded Sid. "John McCain is right."

"Extremely right," Sid agreed, shaking Ollie's hand as he went out the door.

"God's gonna get you for that," Terry Brown grinned.

As Sid locked up the building, she scraped her knuckles on the door jam. "Ow!" she said. "Damn!"

"See?" said Terry. "It's a sign."