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We Help One Another Hope in Tough Times

I don't know about anyone else, but I find this time in human history nearly overwhelming. There are so many big changes going on at one time, some major decisions seem so misguided, fueling yet more difficulties.

Amid all this I have teared up more than once at tributes to Tim Russert — for his competence, even-handedness, and great ability to respect and love people across the political spectrum. Such gifts are so greatly needed currently.

June 16 I participated in a gathering of three organizations: Kentucky chapters of Common Cause (a nonpartisan and nonprofit citizens network working hard for honest, open and accountable government at all levels), League of Women Voters (with a similar mission — famous for the many candidate forums and debates they have convened over the years), and United Nations Association USA.

Despite national meetings and weddings, a good 50 people were in the room.

Two major things occurred during this gathering. First, former Kentucky Governor Brereton Jones was honored for the ethics regulations and legislation he fostered during his administration and for his scandal free administration. This strengthened my belief that such can actually be done.

The other major item: getting to meet and hear from Bob Edgar, Methodist minister, 6-term former US Representative, general secretary for National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA for 7 years, and currently president of Common Cause. He too is another person who has with great honesty and competence committed his life to public service. It can be done!

During his time in Congress he led efforts to improve public transportation, fought wasteful water projects and authored the community Right to Know provision of Super Fund legislation. He also served on the House Select

Committee on Assassinations that investigated Dr Martin Luther King Jr.'s and President Kennedy's deaths.

The records of both these persons reminded me again of the power of public service to do good, powerfully complementing the good individuals do.

Some points from Mr Edgar's presentation:

- We are the leaders we are awaiting.
- People today tend to join movements.
- We are wise to join the movement for good government.
- Good government undergirds work on all issues. Connect these dots, build those partnerships!
- Citing another very wise person: the test of government is how it touches people in the dawn, sunset and shadows of life. (How is our U.S. no government doing on our watch?)
- People are hungry for good government.

The whole evening reminded me that I am not alone amid all the challenges whirling all around us and that there are very competent organizations working on issues about which I care deeply.

So, I am a dues-paying member of 2 of these organizations, serve on the board of one, at least skim carefully their information as it comes in, respond to their legislative alerts as often as I can (and they make them so user-friendly any more), share with people in my circles of influence the good news about their fine work. I am proud that state media and government people consider Common Cause in Kentucky a "watch dog" group; Richard Beliles, our president, leads the pack.

These groups and the people in them are, I firmly believe, part of God's answer to my prayer for help in this most "interesting" time. I trust God hears my gratitude in response.

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The Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of Kentucky, established in 1968. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. There are 406,000 Catholics in the Commonwealth. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute CCK's Board of Directors.