

ASHLAND CULTURE OF PEACE COMMISSION:

By Jeff Golden Ashland Culture of Peace Commission

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As you might have heard, there's an election campaign underway right now. Tens of thousands of them, actually, many for offices that might impact our daily lives over the next few years as much or more than President Clinton or President Trump will.

This is the first full election since the launch of the
..... about a year ago, and it has some of us working with ACPC curious: What would an election that embodies a culture of peace look like?

It's a tough puzzle, because elections are anything but win-win activities. Their defining purpose is to yield a winning and, generally, one or more losing candidates — not exactly an ideal set-up for creative solutions that meet some of everyone's needs, which is part of what a culture of peace is all about.

It's not hard to imagine a campaign more thoughtful, respectful and tolerant than what we're used to seeing; this year it's really not hard. But reworking a process that's driven by an imperative to beat the other guy into a ritual of peace — that's a tough stretch.

Let's take a small step. We won't try to transform the mood and tone of this year's presidential election, careening along as it is with a kind of darkly manic energy. What makes more sense is to start at home.

This November's ballot will include an Ashland mayor's race with four candidates and a total of seven candidates for three city council seats. The ACPC has invited all of them to a candidates forum from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 5, in, 175 N. Main Street.

Like other forums, this forum is intended to help you get to know the candidates before you mark your ballot. Unlike other forums, this one will consciously explore how the competitive dynamic of political campaigns can fit within a culture of peace, the culture into which we eventually want to fit all civic aspects of our community.

We're aiming to make this forum one of the most encouraging and upbeat civic events Ashland's ever had, and when you're creating an energetically different model, it's hard to know exactly how to pull that off. It calls for the creativity of more than just a few organizers. It calls to all of us with an affectionate concern for our city, an interest in elections, and a deep, if not wholly clear, knowing that politics can line up with our highest values much more closely than what we're witnessing.

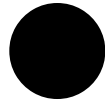
So we want your help. We plan to ask the candidates the very best questions you're willing to send us. "Best," for our purposes, are questions that (1) generate respect among opponents and a genuine curiosity about what those with different views are thinking, and (2) shed light on what candidates would work on as mayor or councilors to advance a culture of peace in Ashland.

Will you give all this a few minutes' thought and see what comes up? What would you ask the people who want to govern Ashland in order to discover how committed they are to a culture of peace in our community and to learn what they see themselves doing with their authority if they win?

We'd like you to send one or more questions to ashlandcpc@gmail.com by Wednesday, Sept. 28. Please include your name and indicate whether we can mention your name if we use your question(s).

Whether or not you contribute questions, we'd like you to join us from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 5, in Wesley Hall at First United Methodist Church, to engage with the mayoral and council candidates on their visions for our community and how a culture of peace might fit into them. When it comes to changing the tone and quality of our political life, we are the ones we've been waiting for.

Jeff Golden, a long-time Ashlander and political commentator, is the founding producer of the public television series and is an Ashland Culture of Peace Commissioner. Email comments and questions to ashlandcpa@gmail.com, or drop by the commission office at 33 1st St., Suite 1. The ACPC website is; like the commission on Facebook at; follow on Twitter.



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