

ASK UNCLE ED 3B

This is a continuation* of Uncle Ed's response to Sad Singer regarding continued participation in a Church choir full of Trump voters. In Part 3A Uncle Ed considered the possibility of leaving.

Dear Sad Singer:

Uncle Ed knows that leaving may not be possible and it may not be what you want to do. Here Uncle Ed offers ideas out what to do if you decide to stay.

Uncle Ed suggests that you first rethink your definition of "friends". Before the 2016 election, you probably considered as "friends" most, if not all, of your co-workers, the people you know at Church, the people you work with on civic projects or in community groups or Little League. The connotations of that word made it possible to ignore aspects of people that you didn't care for or even accept. Cooperating on a project, just like being on a team, smoothes over significant differences. In our minds, we distinguish this kind of friend from the categories of close friends, or personal friends.

Uncle Ed thinks that's not a good definition now. We aren't friends with people just because we have to work with them. You might decide to cooperate with choir and church people you don't like or respect. But they will never be your friends. You have to keep them at arms length to protect yourself.

You mention that you wish you had talked more to people before the election. Uncle Ed is certain you are not at fault. There are norms of behavior in your church and in your choir, and talking about politics is almost certainly off limits. Uncle Ed has 25 years of experience in choirs and choruses, and each has its own unspoken rules. For example, in one singing group, arguments about politics were common. No one's mind was changed, but the exchanges gave

Uncle Ed insights into the thinking of conservatives and fundamentalists that Uncle Ed would not have had in his workaday life. In other groups, the conversations were more mundane, and more fun. Raising politics would have bored Uncle Ed's friends (and these people were friends) stiff. If Clinton had been trailing in the polls, you might have felt forced to act differently, but there was no reason for you to think she wouldn't win, and thus no reason to even consider violating the norms.

In the prior post, Uncle Ed urged you to get together with like-minded choristers and others from the Church to talk about what to do. That's the first step if you decide to stay, too. Here are some things to consider.

1. Sane Republicans knew before they voted for him that that Trump is a bully, a narcissist, a racist, a misogynist, an anti-Semite, that he is bad at business and that he is vulgar and ignorant. They must have come up with reasons to vote for him in spite of this knowledge, and Uncle Ed is pretty sure those reasons begin with Democrats are evil, and Hillary Clinton is the Devil. It might have been emails, or some other fake scandal, or her slight turn to the left during the campaign. Maybe they didn't think Trump could win, so it was safe to vote for him. Maybe it was some Republican policy position like lower taxes on themselves, smaller government, fewer regulations, abortion, guns, who knows.

Now they see him flailing in surreal press conferences, all his neuroses on display. They watch him installing Dr. Strangelove characters and white nationalists and other dregs of society into high government positions, instead of the nice Republicans they respect. They see the ridicule heaped on him around the world, and the way other nations respond to his incompetence and boorishness. They must be experiencing a sickening case of buyer's remorse. Your goal is to figure out how to

exploit that buyer's remorse and persuade the sane Republicans to vote for Democrats in the mid-terms, or at least not to vote for Republican legislators. That would create a check on the worst instincts of Trump, and keep him from wrecking the country.

2. Do not discuss Clinton. Don't say she would have been a better choice, don't explain her policies or talk about how foolish she made Trump look in the debates. If someone else raises her, say something like: You would never have had to defend her intelligence or her knowledge or her mental stability. She would have done things you didn't like but she wouldn't embarrass you like Trump does.

3. Listen closely to the things about Trump they make them nervous and push those ideas harder than they do. For example, many Republicans are worried about Russia. Don't rant. Agree with them with short sentences that they can hook onto and expand. If they don't expand, then you do, again with short sentences. If you read Emptywheel you know more about this than they do. Use that information to increase their concerns.

Mention the Saturday Night Live skits with Trump and Putin. Talk about the late night mockery of his stability in minor things like losing the first round of the lawsuit over the travel ban, or Nordstrom dropping Ivanka's line. Ask how he will deal with the Russians if they provoke him. Mention the unknown relations between Trump's businesses and Russian banks and Russian partners. Eventually point out that if we had Trump's tax returns we'd know for sure. Keep your side of the conversation short.

4. There are many rich Republicans who viscerally hate liberals. For them, Uncle Ed suggests a different approach. Don't talk to them at all. If you can't avoid talking and can't avoid politics, use words like vulgar, tasteless, boorish, common. Say those words with the sneer your mother used when she caught you picking your nose. Sneering puts them in the

position of defending him, which they won't, and should end the discussion. Don't leave. Make them walk off.

5. Any effort to act on these ideas will violate the norms of the choir and the Church. It has to be done. Normal people cannot pretend that Trump is a normal, and that this is just a routine change in government. He isn't normal. This isn't a normal government. Nothing can be the same including personal relationships. And they are at fault, not you.

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* This is one of an occasional series in which I try to come to grips with the Age of Trump. Sad Singer's letter is based on my personal experience in a volunteer choir at a PCUSA church, and other singing groups that included a substantial number of conservatives. By extension, it applies to other groups where sane people have to deal with Trump voters.