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We need more 'stormy' relationships like Obama and Christie

Maureen Fiedler | Nov. 2, 2012 NCR Today

What a difference a storm makes.

At a recent election event in Richmond, Va., New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, one of Mitt Romney's most important campaign surrogates, questioned President Barack Obama's leadership, saying the president was like someone "blindly walking around the White House, looking for a clue." He was the keynote speaker at the Republican National Convention, lambasting Obama throughout.

Now, in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy (or "Frankenstorm," as some are calling it), he is working hand in glove with Obama for the swift recovery of the people of New Jersey from the ravages of that storm.

Christie has a reputation for being a straight-talker, a mince-no-words kind of governor. And in the aftermath of this storm, his former critique of Obama has given way to effusive praise. He has called the president's response "outstanding." He thanked the president for his compassion and concern, saying he has been "all over this" and "deserves great credit."

Obama responded in kind, thanking Christie for "extraordinary leadership and partnership."

The two of them toured the most devastated parts of New Jersey on Wednesday, with a focus on cleanup, recovery and showing direct compassion for the storm's victims. Here were two elected leaders of different parties, working for the good of suffering and vulnerable people. What a concept!

Both left presidential politics aside to focus on the disaster. Obama left the campaign trail in this final week of the campaign, and Christie even blew off a suggestion from Fox News that Romney tour the devastation as well. He was emphatic that the presidential election was far less important than the welfare of suffering people in New Jersey.

Now, I have never been a fan of Chris Christie, but I'm revising my assessment. He suddenly sounds like those old-style moderate, bipartisan Republicans I used to respect but thought had gone extinct. Some of you may remember them: leaders like Dwight D. Eisenhower, Margaret Chase Smith, Jacob Javits, Charles "Mac" Mathias, Charles Percy.

And a larger question arises: Can this cooperation across party lines be replicated -- dare I say it? -- in Congress? Can leaders of both parties put aside partisanship for the greater good, especially the welfare of those most vulnerable?

One can hope. When it comes to practicing religious values in political office, this is the way to do it.

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