

In 1776, the most influential man in the little town of Lexington was a parson by the name of Jonas Clark. On the night Paul Revere made his famous ride, Parson Clark was having dinner with John Hancock and Samuel Adams. These two great patriots asked Clark the question: If war came, would the men of Lexington fight? Rev. Clark replied that he had trained them for that very hour. The next day, the "shot heard 'round the world" was fired only a few yards from his parsonage.

[Our liberty] began in a church—with a parson not afraid to speak out on the great issues of freedom and tyranny. The resounding sermons preached by "the Black Regiment" (named because of the black robes the clergy wore at the time), of which Clark was a part, set the stage for the liberty of America. ...

Today, there is a great conflict of tremendous *issues*—the greatest battle in history. In *Slouching Toward Gomorrah*, Judge Robert Bork quotes from William Butler Yeats' poem titled *The Second Coming* [*of Christ*]: "The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity;"

—(Excerpted from the Memorial Day 1997 sermon text of Dr. D. James Kennedy)

Churches can make a tremendous difference in government and public policy by helping the members of their congregations be informed, responsible citizens. As part of its mission, a church should educate on:
★ vital issues of public policy (e.g., abortion, education, taxes, etc.);
★ sound principles of government;

★ responsible citizenship;
★ the importance of involvement.

A church can educate its congregation through:

- ★ preaching from the pulpit;
- ★ teaching Sunday school classes;
- ★ sponsoring seminars on topics such as Biblical principles of government;
- ★ providing educational materials.

One of the most important tasks a church can perform is to teach its members how to be effective citizens.

Legislation

General Rule: Under Section 501(c)(3)

of the Internal Revenue Code, churches may engage in some "legislative activity" and still qualify for favored tax status, as long as such activity is not more than an "insubstantial" part of its overall activity in terms of time and money (e.g., worship service, Sunday school programs, etc.). In other words, the amount of permissible legislative activity is somewhat vague.

Legislative activity that amounts to 5 percent of all church activity is generally considered "safe." Legislative activity between 5 and 20 percent is less certain and, therefore, less safe. Activity over 20 percent has been found unacceptable by the Internal Revenue Service. "Legislative activity" is defined as any

- ★ legislation—bills before the U.S. Congress and state legislatures;
- ★ measures before city councils;
- ★ initiatives;
- ★ referendums.

It covers such legislative activity as:

- ★ contacting legislators;
- ★ urging church members and others to communicate with legislators;
- ★ circulating petitions.

IMPORTANT: The Internal Revenue

Code places no limitations on the legislative activity of church members—including pastors who act as individuals, not as representatives of the church.

Mailing Lists

A church may loan its membership or mailing list to another organization for the purpose of influencing legislation. However, the cost of providing the list would constitute a legislative expenditure.

Factions

General Rule: The Internal Revenue Code

absolutely prohibits 501(c)(3) organizations, including churches, from engaging in activity in support of or in opposition to any candidate for public office—or from participating in a political campaign.

On the other hand, a church may engage in some nonpartisan election-related activities, including voter registration and voter education projects. Nonpartisan means "based on, influenced by, affiliated with, or supporting no single political party."

ELECTION-RELATED

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED:

Endorsing Candidates

★ A pastor may, as an individual citizen, personally endorse or oppose a candidate. The fact that he is employed by a church

does not negate his constitutional rights to

- ★ free speech and political expression.
- ★ A pastor may also lend his name to a candidate for political advertisements or devote personal time to a candidate's campaign.

★ The pastor's title may even be listed with his name, for identification

purposes only.
★ It should be made very clear that the pastor is stating his personal position—not that of the church. Additionally, it is wise not to not make such statements on a regular basis to prevent the positions from being attributed to the church.

Appearances by Candidates

★ Candidates may be introduced to a congregation in the course of the service.
★ Candidates may be given the opportunity to preach, teach and read Scriptures on the same basis as any church member.

★ Generally, public office holders may be freely invited to speak at a church. However, if the office holder is also a candidate, the above rules apply to him also.

Voter Registration and Get-Out-the-Vote Drives

★ A church may sponsor or conduct a nonpartisan voter registration or "get-out-the-vote" drive among its members or on its premises.
★ As part of such an effort, a church may spend money to pay registration organizers or to mail registration forms.