HermNaz On

Church and Politics

What Churches can and cannot do.

As the Lead Pastor of HermNaz, I have a duty to guard “the flock” God has blessed me to lead and oversee. Psalm 147:12-13 “Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! He has strengthened the bars of your gates, He has blessed your children within you.”

This is a great passage illustrating God’s protective hand over His people and the blessing and praise that results from it. As a “good shepherd,” I am instructed to guard the flock entrusted to me by The Great Shepherd (Acts 20:28). That means as a pastor I am to be active in fending off dangers to the Church and her members. In today’s culture we are faced with some dangers that come in part from our government.

If I apply the Psalm 147 verse of “guarding the flock” (often illustrated as a city), the term “bars” can refer to all the things that protect the city, including good laws, good lawmakers, good judges, good municipal rules, and good order in the city (church). We are blessed when we work toward this goal. The clear implication is that as a pastor I have a particular responsibility in civic matters which includes interacting with civil leadership and helping equip our congregation for meaningful political action so we can elect good governors and elect laws that are just.

My desire as your pastor is to best equip you, the people who call HermNaz their place of worship, with Biblical knowledge and how the legal institution of the United States views our Christian stands. I want to always be Biblical in what we teach, I want to challenge us to always pray for our leadership, and to offer the best Christian political educational information possible within the law. I find many times people in the church get frustrated at their pastoral staff involving political issues either for taking a stand that seems strong or for not saying anything at all.

I understand that in America we seem to be faced with new social, cultural and moral issues weekly. While our worship time together will not become a political platform each week, we will, however, teach Biblical truths without apology.

So I trust the following information will give you some insight into what a pastor and a church **can** and **cannot** do.

I love my God! I love my family! I love my church! I am excited to watch God move in the life of our church, for we have exciting days coming.

**The Federal Tax-Exempt Status Of Churches**

Almost all churches are exempt from federal income taxes. As a tax-exempt organization, a church:

1. Is exempt from paying corporate income taxes, and donations to the church are tax deductible on individuals’ federal tax returns.
2. May expend funds for religious, charitable, and educational purposes, as well as an insubstantial amount on lobbying to promote or oppose legislation.

**Churches Cannot Do This**

* Churches cannot support or oppose political candidates
  + A church, or spokesman on behalf of the church, should not support or oppose a candidate’s election campaign or any political party.
* Churches cannot contribute to candidates or partisan election activities.
  + Church funds, including special offerings used to support political candidates or partisan political activity is forbidden. This includes “in-kind” support, like allowing free or discounted use of church facilities, mailing list or assets.
* Churches cannot allow candidate campaign appearances.
  + Church leaders should not allow candidates to deliver campaign speeches or raise funds during a church sponsored gathering.

**Churches Can Do This Within Limits**

* Churches may engage in limited legislative activity
* Churches may safely engage in a limited amount of the following legislative activities:
* Contacting Legislators
* Urging church members and others to communicate with legislators
* Circulating petitions
* Recommend how citizens should vote

**Churches Can Do This**

* Churches may address cultural, social and moral issues.
  + Churches are free to address social, cultural and moral issues from a Biblical perspective. When those topics become clearly “legislative,” 5% harbor rule should be applied.
* Churches may provide nonpartisan voter education.
  + Churches can provide education on a variety of government and citizenship related issues, including the impact of policy decisions.
* Churches may provide nonpartisan voters guides.
* Churches may sponsor nonpartisan voter registration.
  + Churches may also remind and inform people of upcoming elections and encourage them to vote.

**The Christian Citizen ~ Fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of citizenship**

*“Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God.” Romans 13:1*

Throughout the New Testament, Christians are told to be respectful of government authorities and to fulfill their basic responsibilities and obligations. For Christians in the United States today, those instructions will have different implications than for those in first century Rome. Different because ours is a government of, “by the people and for the people.” That means our duty is to elect representatives who will uphold our laws and Constitution with justice and integrity. Here are some ways Christians can fulfill this duty:

* **Pray for our government officials** ~ This applies for all Christians in government context and promises to lead to a more peace-filled community life.
* **Submit to our governing authorities** ~ Christians are instructed to honor and respect our governing leadership except when those authorities ask us to do things contrary to God’s commands.
* **Register and vote** ~ This is the most basic way we can participate.
* **Be informed** ~ The Bible and history speak clearly to the fact that the quality and value of a nation’s leaders matter. Therefore, as Christian citizens it is our duty to research those seeking public office to better elect people of character and justice.
* **Communicate with elected officials** ~ We are citizens that elected them and our voice does matter.
* **Encourage others to get involved** ~ One way to multiply our influence is by informing and challenging your family, friends, co-workers and church community to fulfill their civic duty to pray, vote and support upright candidates. Distributing the Christian voters guide is one simple way to do this.

*The above guidelines were compiled form content published by the IRS (Internal Revenue Service). FECA (Federal Election Campaign Act), ADF (Alliance Defending Liberty) and other sources.*