

**FOR UNTO US  
A CHILD IS BORN**



**THE LEGAL  
ALERT**

A Monthly Publication of the Christian Law Association

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# KEEPING YOUR CHURCH SAFE DURING CHRISTMAS

## 'Tis the season—to decorate in ways that may be a fire hazard?

No one wants to be the Grinch who stole Christmas, but it is important to take care of the details when decorating your ministry property for Christmas.

If you use real trees during the Christmas season, remember that trees are initially fire retardant, but when they have not been watered for a long period of time, they become fire hazards. If you can use a freshly harvested tree, it is safer. However, regardless of how long it has been since your trees have been cut, it is very important for someone to have the job of regularly watering them. If you notice that the needles shed easily, it is probably time for the tree to be replaced.

Be sure you know the permit requirements of your local area. Many cities and municipalities have strict requirements for businesses and churches. In some places, there is a limit to the number of trees that can be used in a single room, depending on room size. In other places, live trees may be used in businesses and churches only if the building

is equipped with an automatic sprinkler system. If you use artificial trees, be sure that you purchase trees labeled as fire retardant.

When you decorate Christmas trees, be sure to use only “listed” lights and wiring. In other words, the materials you use need to be high quality. Even if you are on a tight budget, never purchase Christmas lighting that is not certified as being safe.

As you place your decorations, be careful to make certain that you never obstruct any exits! It is extremely important that you take the time to ensure that all doorways, hallways, and any other exits are clear. If there is a fire, seconds matter; and you would never want your decorations to keep people from easily exiting the building in case of an emergency.

Take a moment to consider the items that are close to your Christmas trees. During the

holiday season, people often decorate with candles or use extra space heaters to keep a room warm. Be sure there are no candles, heaters, or lanterns close to the Christmas trees to avoid a potential fire hazard.

Many churches enjoy a candlelight service on Christmas Eve. If this is done with real candles, carefully consider who should receive such candles. It can literally be a flaming disaster to provide a toddler with a live flame! Many churches have opted for the safety of flameless candles. It is not difficult or overly expensive to purchase LED flameless candles that provide realistic flickering lights.

As you plan for this joyous Christmas season, be sure to keep the safety of your members in mind. And if you have any questions or concerns, please contact our offices for assistance.



# THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS



**For many people, the calendar year seems to have a rhythm they can feel.** As the days begin to shorten and temperatures cool, it seems that nature itself is pointing to the season where Christians traditionally celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Children count the days until they can open their presents, while parents count the cost of the latest and greatest toys. Homemakers decorate and plan fabulous family meals, while travel planners try to predict the best pre-holiday travel dates.

Coming on the heels of Thanksgiving, many people have a stronger sense of gratitude than usual during the Christmas season. This is certainly true of the staff of the Christian Law Association. This year again, our ministry has answered thousands of questions and defended Christian people and ministries that have been sued for the faith. We are extremely aware of the fact that none of our work would be possible without the gracious and generous contributions of our supporters. We are grateful that you hold us in your prayers, and we are blessed by your financial contributions.

As the spirit of Christmas pervades the month of December, we must remember to pray for those who remain in legal peril. These dear people often feel the pressure of their legal proceedings more acutely during this time, partly because they know this is supposed to be a season of celebration and cheer. When you are in the midst of a long court case, the weight of the law creates emotional pressures that are difficult to describe. When you sit in a courtroom day after day and hear an adversarial attorney describe you and your life's work in the most demeaning terms possible, it takes a toll on the human spirit.

At the Christian Law Association, we count it a privilege to stand with God's people, especially during the tough times. Our ministry has a long history of visiting jails on Christmas Day to comfort Christians who are wrongly imprisoned for the faith. We do our best to be especially sensitive with all of our clients during the holiday season, doing our best to follow the footsteps of the Saviour.

During this month that brings both joy and sorrow, we believe it is important to remember that the reason we

have Christmas in the first place is to celebrate the fact that Jesus came to earth and was born of a virgin. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, rose from the dead, and now lives at the right hand of the Father making intercession for the saints.

The fact that Jesus came is a message that should fill us with hope. Christmas reminds us that we are not here by accident, that God has not forgotten us. Our loving Heavenly Father cared about us so deeply that He sent His Son to earth to be our Saviour. And when we remember that marvelous truth, we understand that God is with us during our times of joy and in our seasons of sorrow.

Merry Christmas from the Christian Law Association! May this month be a season of great blessing to you and your entire family.

## ARE YOU LICENSED TO SING THAT?



**Many churches livestream their services,** which can be a great help to people who are sick, shut in, or are for whatever reason unable to attend church in person. The copyright rules and regulations are a little strange. Essentially, churches may place a copyrighted song on the screen for their worship service; but this built-in permission does not extend to services that are livestreamed. If copyrighted music is livestreamed, permissions, in the form of a license, must be in place.

In order to comply, many churches hire a copyright company to provide a license for them. But Christmas can be tricky. Some licenses that are available to churches essentially cover all songs; other licenses are limited to religious songs. During the Christmas season, there may be some church events where a secular Christmas song like "Winter Wonderland" is sung. Whether or not a church has permission to livestream such a song is dependent on its license.

During the Christmas season, you may want to be sure that your church has the right kind of license. You want to be sure your "Winter Wonderland" doesn't turn into a Christmas copyright lawsuit!

The page is framed by a decorative border of school supplies and Christmas-themed items. At the top, there is a yellow pencil, a pair of scissors, a wooden triangle ruler, a gingerbread man, a red Christmas ornament, holly leaves with berries, a blue eraser, and a red pencil. At the bottom, there is a candy cane, a yellow pencil, a red Christmas ornament, holly leaves with berries, a gingerbread man, and a pine branch. The background is a solid red color with scattered yellow stars.

## USING THE SCHOOL PA SYSTEM

**We recently became involved in a situation** in the Deep South involving a high school instructor who worked in a local public school. This rather large school had a number of student-led clubs, including a chess club, an archery club, and a Bible club. This instructor was the staff supervisor for the Bible club, which met during lunch each Thursday.

Members of the Bible club noticed that announcements had been made over the school's PA system to advertise meetings of the chess club and the archery club, but when the staff supervisor approached the school office staff about announcing the Bible club meeting, he was told it was not possible for such an announcement to be made.

At first, the Bible club supervisor thought there might have been a mistake, but the more he looked into it, the more he realized that the school was planning to allow the chess and archery clubs to announce their meetings, but not the Bible club. One of the school administrators had the opinion that making such an announcement might offend some non-Christian students and perhaps violate the notion of the separation of church and state. Frankly, this administrator simply did not want to deal with any negative consequences that might be associated with these Bible club announcements.

When the Bible club supervisor contacted the Christian Law Association, our attorneys were able to quickly discern that the school was practicing unlawful religious discrimination against the Bible club. The school could, of course, ban all clubs from operating on its premises. Alternatively, they could continue to allow

all clubs to meet on school property, but ban all of these student-led organizations from making announcements over the school's PA system. What was illegal, of course, was allowing one club to exercise a privilege that was denied another.

In this particular case, our attorneys provided the Bible club supervisor with the information he needed to have respectful, but factually accurate, discussions with his supervisors; and we sent a letter to the appropriate administrator, a letter that clearly explained how the law applied to this situation and what the consequences could potentially be for schools that did not follow the law. In a short amount of time, the situation was resolved, and it seemed to be resolved in a way that left all parties on friendly terms. The members of the Bible club were relieved that they were no longer being treated as second-class citizens, and the announcements that were made over the school PA system did not seem to cause any difficulties.

In many ways, our nation is experiencing turmoil. Some would go so far as to say that the America of fifty years ago is no longer recognizable. Regardless of the profound changes that affect the cultural fabric of our society, it is still the law of the land that religious discrimination may not be practiced at the public school. It is important for God's people to understand the technicalities of the law and to have great wisdom as they work through these issues. When there are questions and difficult situations, the Christian Law Association is honored to stand with you to ensure that your legally protected religious rights here in the United States remain unhindered.

...THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME  
**JESUS: FOR HE SHALL SAVE**  
HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS.—MATTHEW 1:21



## A MINISTRY OF LEGAL HELPS

Since 1969, CLA has been providing free legal assistance to Bible-believing churches and Christians who are experiencing difficulty in practicing their religious faith because of governmental regulation, intrusion, or prohibition in one form or another. The Christian Law Association serves in the following ways...

- Free legal defense of those facing difficulties for the Biblical faith
- Free legal counsel to churches and Christians for their ministries
- Free legal help to homeschooling families
- Publication of The Legal Alert, a monthly newsletter
- Legal books and other resources to inform Christians of their rights
- Free legal consulting to local, state, and federal officials and legislators to provide maximum religious liberty
- Intercessory prayer ministry for requests sent to the ministry offices
- Prayer initiative for our national leadership and government
- Legal seminars for ministries to help prevent lawsuits
- Weekday radio program broadcast, The Legal Alert, on 1,600 outlets around the world
- Preaching in churches across the country



## JESUS UNDERSTANDS

A children's church worker had been scratching her head to come up with a unique approach for her church's Christmas program. Finally, frustrated by her lack of creative inspiration, she admitted to herself, "I am out of ideas," which led her to ask her sixth-grade children to prepare a short Christmas speech, hoping that their input would give her some fresh material for her program.

The following week, she was amazed with the Christmas speech one of her students had written. The girl said something like this.

"I was born as a little baby; Jesus was too. I am now growing up as a little child; while He was on earth, Jesus grew up too. I can't wait to be an adult someday; Jesus was an adult too. Sometimes, I have problems; Jesus had problems too. Christmas reminds me that Jesus loves us so much that He came to earth, and He understands everything about us. Christmas means Jesus knows all about me."

Here at the Christian Law Association, it is our privilege to help Christians when they are sued for the faith. Jesus understands that too. The New Testament explains that many of the lawyers in Jesus' day tried to use tricky questions to diminish His divinity. As God's people, we can be comforted to know that Jesus understands us completely, even when we find ourselves in the middle of a courtroom battle we would very much like to avoid.

Hebrews 4:15 beautifully explains that "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

MERRY  
christmas

# PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYER



**We covet your prayers for these requests and hundreds of others we receive regularly.**

**FLORIDA:** Pray for a pastor who called our office for help as he handles an ongoing situation with a contractor and the church insurance regarding repairs on the church building because of the hurricanes.

**TEXAS:** Pray for a pastor and his wife who contacted us for direction in dealing with disgruntled neighbors.

**TENNESSEE:** Pray for a pastor who reached out to CLA after receiving a notice from his HOA regarding having church gatherings in his home.

**CALIFORNIA:** Pray for a pastor seeking our attorneys' help regarding a troublesome situation with a leasing company.

**NEW YORK:** Pray for a pastor who contacted our office for advice as he considers purchasing an abandoned church building in the city to help further the Gospel.

**FLORIDA:** Pray for a pastor and his church members asking for guidance as they look for an open door to share the Gospel at their local public school as they consider volunteering because of the need for more Spanish speakers. Our attorneys advised them about their rights in this situation.

**MISSOURI:** Pray for a youth pastor who contacted our office for direction regarding stores allowing nonprofit groups to set up tables to sell items outside of their stores, but refusing the church youth group the same opportunity.

**TENNESSEE:** Pray for a pastor who reached out to our attorneys to discuss the liability concerns of having international churches.

**PENNSYLVANIA:** Pray for a church as the youth group conducts a fundraiser. CLA attorneys offered advice to the staff member who contacted our office. It is important to know the liability and how to handle donations specifically for fundraisers.

**TEXAS:** Pray for a pastor seeking counsel from our attorneys as he considers merging his church with another local congregation.

**NORTH CAROLINA:** Pray for the director of a transitional home who is trying to figure out how to navigate a grant as they open a second home for the ministry. Our attorneys provided guidance about how to proceed.

**VIRGINIA:** Pray for an evangelist and a group of students asked by a dean to leave a school property or be arrested after setting up a sign offering to talk with other students about their beliefs. CLA attorneys discussed with the evangelist how religious freedoms apply in this situation.

**ILLINOIS:** Pray for a Christian who contacted CLA for help after being discriminated against at her workplace for talking to a coworker about the Gospel during an unpaid break.

**VIRGINIA:** Pray for a Christian business owner who reached out to CLA attorneys for assistance after her copyrighted merchandise was duplicated and sold as someone else's design.

**TEXAS:** Pray for a public-school student who was assigned a book that was against his religious beliefs. With his parents' help, the student requested to use different reading material, but his request was denied. Our attorneys provided guidance to his parents about how to approach the teacher about a religious accommodation for their student.

**NORTH CAROLINA:** Pray for a Christian man who asked for our attorneys' counsel as he requests a religious accommodation to not work on Sundays at his workplace.

**WISCONSIN:** Pray for a Christian woman who contacted CLA about her intention to reach out to her local library board in hopes of setting up a library card system that allows parents to monitor what materials their children are allowed to borrow at the library.

**ALASKA:** Pray for a Christian public school teacher who called our office for advice on the restrictions her school set for clubs and how they affect the student-led Bible club.

**OHIO:** Pray for a Christian woman who asked for our help as she works with her supervisor to not be scheduled on Sundays during certain times so that she may attend services.

**FLORIDA:** Pray for a Christian man who contacted CLA attorneys for guidance on starting a Bible club at the charter school where he works.

**NORTH CAROLINA:** Pray for a Christian father who contacted our office for direction regarding his rights as a parent after his child received school assignments that violated their religious beliefs.

**WISCONSIN:** Pray for a Christian woman who sought guidance from our attorneys about her right to pass out tracts after reading about a similar situation in our newsletter. We are always honored to provide legal advice on your right to witness!

**INDIANA:** Pray for a Christian man who called our office for help after being denied his religious accommodation to have Sundays off.

**MINNESOTA:** Pray for a Christian who reached out to CLA attorneys after being approached by committee members at a free public event and told that he was not permitted to hand out Bibles and threatened with arrest if he did not stop.

CALL UNTO ME, AND I WILL ANSWER THEE, AND SHEW THEE GREAT AND MIGHTY THINGS, WHICH THOU KNOWEST NOT.  
—JEREMIAH 33:3



**Have a question or prayer request? We would be honored to help!**  
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