



**THE LEGAL
ALERT**

A Monthly Publication of the Christian Law Association

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DECENTLY AND IN ORDER



The New Testament admonishes the church to do things “decently and in order” (I Corinthians 14:40). While that verse undoubtedly has many applications, it can do a lot to help keep churches legally safe.

One of our goals is to help churches develop good habits when they perform tasks that occur on a regular basis. For example, if a church operates a Sunday school class for third-grade boys, it would help that process to be done “decently and in order” if the teacher took attendance every Sunday, if the attendance were recorded in the church office, and if the church office had a good system for retaining records. To some, taking attendance is a trivial matter; but if the church is ever hit with a lawsuit, excellent attendance records can save the day. Some cases are won because church records prove that a certain teacher was not even on the property on a given Sunday.

When it comes to giving, churches can be greatly helped if they develop good habits about receiving donations. For example, if someone wanted to donate

\$500 to a scholarship fund to the school, he could receive a tax deduction for that; but if he wanted to “donate” \$500 to pay his grandson’s tuition, that would not be eligible for a tax deduction. Having orderly procedures in place makes it easier for everyone—both staff members and donors—to know what to expect.

The Christian Law Association has developed many legal resources that can assist churches and Christian ministries with operating in a legally appropriate manner. From screening workers to receiving offerings, from taking attendance to structuring the pastor’s salary, procedures exist and should be implemented that can help provide churches with a measure of legal protection. Developing complete, correct practices is one of the ways ministries can accomplish their work “decently and in order.” We urge churches to prayerfully consider how they can operate in a manner that is both pleasing to our Lord and also appropriate in the eyes of the law.

ON THE ROAD...FROM THE COURTHOUSE TO CHURCH HOUSE



Please continue to pray for safety as our legal teams travel around the country. If you would like a CLA speaker to visit your church, please call our offices. We are happy to notify you when we are in your area for cases.



VBS LIABILITY RISKS

VBS is a timeless and wonderful outreach for churches, but all those fun activities and games can often bring with them quite the physical liability risk. Our attorneys strongly recommend you include a liability release form as part of your registration for parents before VBS begins. This can even potentially be done online, but most states require some security procedures if you do, such as some method of verifying who is actually signing the release form. Call our offices today to request a copy of our VBS liability release form template.

IS YOUR MINISTRY ONLINE?



Does your ministry have an online presence? Please call us today to request our free checklist of items to keep in mind before posting.

**NO
SOLICITING**



ARE YOU SOLICITING?

Because we believe that everyone should have a chance to know about Jesus, we often make plans to distribute tracts in the neighborhoods surrounding our churches. But it can be confusing when we come to doors where posted signs announce in no uncertain terms, NO SOLICITING.

While it is true that leaving a tract is actually leafletting rather than solicitation, our attorneys encourage churches to consider avoiding houses which post such signs. Many times, people who take this position can create a lot of unnecessary grief for churches if they feel their privacy has somehow been invaded.

If you have questions about your right to witness, please call the CLA offices!

LEADING OTHERS TO HIM



Adam Gibbs prays with a young man

Our purpose and fervent desire is to bring others to Christ and defend the ministries that also share the Gospel with the lost. Please use the freedoms we have in America while we still have them.

2 Timothy 2:2 *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*



KEEPING A CALENDAR

A busy pastor's day is often quite different from what he plans. Adjusting your calendar at each day's end to an accurate schedule of events can be helpful not only with time management, but also in legal situations. Many lawsuits have been won when an accurate calendar proved someone's innocence in the face of a false accusation.

IT'S OUR HONOR TO HELP THOSE WHO CANNOT HELP THEMSELVES

Our legal team met a pastor's wife in a Southern state, and the look on her face was heartbreaking and unforgettable. For many years, her husband had served as pastor of a small church in their rural community. While their needs had been met, money was obviously in short supply. Their church, though neat and tidy, was in no way ostentatious. In fact, it was undoubtedly time for some much-needed updates.

Then, out of nowhere, the church was devastated by an unfounded attack. A former member had allowed his bitterness to grow, and after not attending for about four years, he had put together an unbelievably complex lawsuit against the church. Experienced attorneys agreed that bankrupting the church was the ultimate goal of the lawsuit. Just hiring attorneys to deal with the legal issues would have been beyond the church's ability.

When the Christian Law Association defends a religious liberty, there is never a charge. This dear Christian, through tears, told our legal missionaries, "There is no way in the world we would have any chance at all without your help. You will never know what this means to us."

MEET SOME OF OUR CLA STAFF



Attorney Ashli Arbo

Attorney Susan Ojeda

In the many decades of our existence, we have worked on both high-profile cases as well as cases that might seem insignificant to many people. But it is always our privilege to help those who cannot help themselves. It is always our honor to defend religious liberty, even when the cases involve churches that struggle financially. We are mindful of the words of our Lord who graciously said, "Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me" (Luke 9:48).

May the Lord keep all our hearts warm towards people who need assistance. We also earnestly covet your prayer and financial support for our legal missionaries as they work around the clock on behalf of many that have little hope of helping themselves.

HOW CAN WE SERVE YOU?



Legal Missionary Seth Haught

Legal Missionary Michael Adams

Are you having a conference or preachers' meeting? We'd be honored if you would allow CLA to attend your meeting and offer our assistance in any way that it is possible for us to be of service.



CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENTS

Many Americans care deeply about politics, and elections are important. Christians with a strong moral compass often feel passionately about current issues and sometimes want their church to endorse a particular candidate.

While CLA commends citizens who exercise their right to vote, we also want to remind churches and tax-exempt organizations that they cannot endorse individual candidates for office without jeopardizing their tax-exempt status. If you have questions about this, please call the offices of CLA today.



HANDLING BAD BEHAVIOR IN CHILDREN'S CHURCH

We know that churches want every child to have a good time at church and, hopefully, hear the Gospel and be saved. However, it is vitally important that churches never tolerate consistently excessive problematic behavior from any child, particularly if the behavior is violent.

A Louisiana appellate court recently ruled that a lawsuit against a church could go forward. The charge? That the Christian school should be held responsible for a child's injuries caused by another child with a history of violent behavior, such as hitting and kicking other students.

This case moving forward is monumental. Churches and Christian schools need to understand that the potential exists for them to be held liable if they don't observe and adequately address violent behavior in their minor attendees. This is just one more reason why we here at CLA strongly recommend that every church require adequate adult supervision in every child's class. If staffing is inadequate, don't offer the class.

Every church should also routinely create documentation of every incident of bad behavior. Additionally, churches definitely have the option to ask parents to keep children with them in the adult services if problematic behavior continues.

Please don't neglect these simple preventive measures to protect your ministry.



PO BOX 8600
MASON, OH 45040
888-252-1969
CHRISTIANLAW.ORG



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
- Legal books and other resources to inform Christians of their rights
- Weekday radio program broadcast, *The Legal Alert*, on over 1,586 outlets around the world
- Publication of *The Legal Alert*, a monthly newsletter
- Free legal help to homeschooling families
- 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
- Preaching in churches across the country

REMOTE AVAILABILITY



In addition to his travels, Dr. Gibbs and other CLA attorneys are available by Zoom for services, meetings, or individual consultations.



PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYER

These requests are just a few of the recent needs from our cases.
We covet your prayers for these and hundreds of others that come to us on a regular basis.

PENNSYLVANIA: Pray for a police officer who called our office after complaints were made against him at work because he talked about church and God. CLA attorneys were able to clarify both his restrictions and his rights as a Christian in the workplace.

ACROSS AMERICA: Pray for leadership in many churches who are seeking guidance from CLA attorneys on updating and adding additional security, child protection policies for their churches, and direction on the new Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) salary threshold.

FLORIDA: Pray for a pastor who called our office after learning that a local ministry lost tax exemption because they allowed food trucks on the property. Our attorneys were able to offer valuable insight specific to his church.

INDIANA: Pray for a newly appointed church treasurer who discovered a possible embezzlement issue and immediately contacted our attorneys regarding the best way to proceed legally.

TEXAS: Pray for a volunteer chaplain who contacted CLA for guidance after being denied access to visit a man in the local county jail. Our attorneys provided guidance on how to approach the situation and meet the standards required to gain access.

NEW YORK, TEXAS & FLORIDA: Pray for pastors our attorneys are advising regarding security camera liability as they seek to deal with issues related to theft on church property.

INDIANA: Pray for a pastor CLA is helping after he was contacted by the city board about the ministry's tax exemption. Our attorneys offered guidance on challenging the outcome of the board's decision.

ARIZONA: Pray for a pastor CLA attorneys are advising as he handles a difficult situation with the city, that is attempting to charge the church thousands of dollars in property taxes.

COLORADO: Pray for a pastor our legal team is helping after he was denied permission to park his mobile chapel at a new truck stop and minister as he has done for years in his area.

FLORIDA: Pray for an assistant pastor asking for guidance from our attorneys as he follows the Lord's leading in starting a Biblical counseling ministry through his church.

ALABAMA: Pray for a Christian with a prison ministry who called CLA after men in the prison filed a grievance due to literature the ministry distributed.

ILLINOIS & GEORGIA: Pray for Christians asking for CLA's assistance after being mandated by their employers to work on Sundays.

OHIO & IDAHO: Pray for Christians who called our office for direction about starting a Bible-based nonprofit to assist with mental health and suicide prevention.

PENNSYLVANIA: Pray for a deacon seeking counsel from CLA attorneys regarding handling finances and other support offered to the church's missionary partners.

OHIO: Pray for a nurse who reached out to our legal team to answer questions and discuss liability issues as she works with her church's pastoral team to start a faith community nursing ministry.

NORTH CAROLINA: Pray for a trustee who called our office after being contacted by an organization desiring to give a designated recipient donation to the church benevolence fund. Our attorneys gave guidance regarding the legal concerns with such donations.

CONGRATULATIONS!



We are so excited to congratulate Sara Kraus, Attorney Seth Kraus's wife, who recently earned her doctorate.