

WE NEED
YOUR HELP IN
2024



**THE LEGAL
ALERT**

A Monthly Publication of the Christian Law Association

JANUARY 2024



“The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him” (Proverbs 20:7). Merriam-Webster defines integrity as “firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values.” In day-to-day speech, people often think of integrity as a people whose actions match their words. If they say, “I’ll get this done by Friday,” and it gets done by Friday, we think of them as people of their word, people of integrity.

Many years ago, John began to work at a small local bank. Not long after he was hired, his boss said, “If Marvin calls, tell him I am not here.”

John asked, “Are you going somewhere?”

The boss answered, “No.”

John questioned, “Are you asking me to lie for you?”

This response angered the boss, and his contempt and frustration for John became apparent. John, urgently attempting to calm the situation, wisely explained, “Sir, if I won’t lie for you, that means I won’t lie to you.”

As we move forward in 2024, we should recommit to being people of integrity. All people have a duty to have integrity, but this is especially important for those that name the name of Christ. From the legal point of view, there are several enemies of integrity that we must be sure to vanquish.

Enemy #1: Wrongly thinking that the principles of religious liberty exempt churches from following the law of the land.

If the government tells churches they cannot preach the Word of God, we join the Apostle Peter who said, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). But when we are maintaining church vehicles and constructing buildings for the Lord’s work, we have a duty to follow the rules and regulations established by our system of government. Why? The Apostle Paul said, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil” (Romans 13:1–3).

Enemy #2: Wrongly thinking that churches that struggle financially can sidestep laws and regulations.

If you have ever been involved in building construction, you know it is almost always more expensive to build according to code than to build without proper permits—hoping no one will notice. Christian people with integrity build properly.

If you have ever attempted to staff a church nursery or find enough teachers for the Sunday school program, you know that it can be somewhat expensive to run background checks on workers. Christian people with integrity must never sidestep this crucial responsibility. When it comes to the safety of our children, we should never, ever think, “I think we can just skip the expense of these background reports because I

think it will all be okay.” That is not the thinking of a person with integrity.

Enemy #3: Wrongly thinking that churches do not have a duty to seek professional guidance.

When it comes to setting up the church financial system, there are certain procedures that must be followed when it comes to paying employees and providing them with benefits. For example, it might be a nice gesture for a church to allow a staff member to use the church van for personal use—but is this considered income by the IRS? It might be nice to give the pastor a bonus for his birthday—but does this income need to be reported?

Truth be told, questions like these are often so complex that well-meaning citizens cannot even imagine all the complexities of the tax code. Because of this, people of integrity seek professional guidance, especially when they are establishing procedures. It is not enough to seek professional help when you know you are having a problem. People of integrity ask, “Can you help me set this up so everything is decent and in order, so that everything is legal?”

Having integrity isn’t always convenient, but it is always right. It is our prayer that all those who name the name of Christ will be able to join the Psalmist in saying, **“Let integrity and uprightness preserve me” (Psalm 25:21).**

PEOPLE OF PRAYER



When Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy, he said, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Timothy 2:1-2). In many cases, it is easy to let prayer become de-emphasized, even among people who faithfully attend church. Yet Paul exhorted—he urged—God's people to be people of prayer.

When Paul used the words *supplications, prayers, intercessions* and *giving of thanks*, it seems that he was urging Christian people to pray every way they knew how. And in another place, Paul commanded that Christians, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

At the Christian Law Association, we understand that prayer is a vital part of our mission. Although prayer is valuable as a spiritual discipline, we see the practical reasons for prayer that Paul described. Paul urged Christians to pray "for all that are in authority." Why? So "that we may lead a quiet and peace life."

In this day, it is no secret that there are many people in authority who have no regard for God, God's Word, and God's church. We have all been shocked to see the number of people

who are willing to demonstrate to show their support for anti-God and pro-Communist causes.

The ongoing battle for religious liberty in these United States requires our legal missionaries to perform arduous labor in a huge number of cases, but we understand that prayer is the foundation of our success in all these vital legal areas.

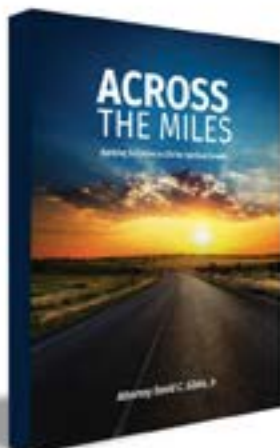


We fervently want our churches to be able to reach people for Christ without interference from the government. We want to be able to present the Gospel message to people of all ages and tell everyone the truth about morality. But we will never win these battles unless we are people of prayer.

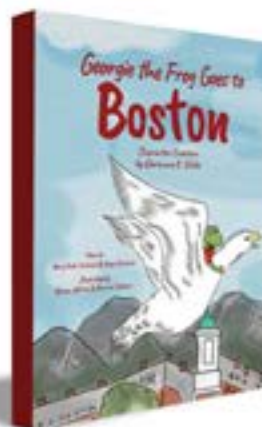
R. A. Torrey said, "Before a word of petition is offered, we should have the definite consciousness that we are talking to God and should believe that He is listening and is going to grant the thing that we ask of Him."

May the Lord give us a renewed heart to pray. Pray for our nation. Pray for religious liberty to flourish. Pray for each other. Pray about everything.

PRAY ABOUT EVERYTHING



Dr. David Gibbs, Jr.'s newest release, *Across the Miles*, includes compelling stories from his many years crossing this nation to trials and churches alike followed by Scriptural application for our everyday lives.



Journey with Georgie and Sally Seagull in our newest release in this series, *George the Frog Goes to Boston*. As the two explore the historic city of Boston, Georgie learns important character lessons based on people and landmarks that played formative roles in our nation's founding and history.

AVAILABLE NOW AT CHRISTIANLAW.ORG

SECURITY

KEEPING THE CHURCH SAFE

Anyone who is aware of current events in America realizes that churches need to carefully consider how they can keep people as safe as possible. The organization of a security team is important. When churches consider how to organize their security teams, they may want to consider these personnel roles:

Security Manager. The security manager is typically appointed by the pastor or deacons to oversee all security and safety matters on the church grounds. This role includes working together with the nursery supervisor, deacons, and trustees to ensure the safest environment possible. In many cases, it is wise to also appoint a Security Manager Assistant as a backup.

Security Team. Normally, a security team is designated by the pastor together with the board of deacons. The role of this group includes, but is not limited to, responding to natural disasters, fires, acts of violence, and acts of terror.

In determining the personnel, the security manager and members of the security team should meet these general requirements.

- Must pass a background check before they begin working in this area.

- Must be a member of the church.
- Must be physically able to perform the duties required.
- Must not have a history of heart problems.
- Must have the ability to remain calm in the event of an emergency.
- Must be able to communicate clearly to other team members, authorities, and members of the congregation.
- Must remember to operate with a spirit of grace and love at all times.
- Must be willing to submit to random drug and alcohol tests.

In choosing a security team, there is great wisdom in waiting until you know someone's character fairly well before giving them a role of this nature. It is vitally important to ensure that the right people are working in this area in order to ensure the safety of those who attend your church.

SAFEGUARDING YOUR CHURCH RECORDS

When we think of theft, we often think of valuable items like cash, jewelry, and electronic equipment. But we must remember that information is also extremely valuable.

Many churches have the names, addresses, and phone numbers of their members collected in a single place or resource. They may also have credit card numbers that people have used for giving and Social Security numbers for all their employees. This information would be extremely valuable to people seeking to harm someone or to steal someone's identity.

Because of this, churches have a duty to keep this information under lock

and key. If someone were to break in to your church, it should not be easy for that person to walk away with personal information about the members.

We have seen some cases where churches are casual with this information during the business day. One church treasurer was in the middle of processing a stack of checks that had been received in the Sunday offering. Unfortunately, he wasn't done by lunch time, and he left the checks sitting out in the church office while he went to lunch. In this particular case, no harm was done; but the potential for mischief was through the roof. Anyone casually walking through the church office

could have easily picked up a treasure trove of information that could cause enormous damage.

Never think, "We've never had trouble like this before. There is no need to obsess over it." Instead, think, "We have a duty to protect the members of our church, so we will do our work carefully and with proper safeguards."

Anyone who has had his identity stolen can testify to the utter misery as well as financial and legal harm it can cause. We urge you to err on the side of caution when protecting members' personal information.





WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE BEING AUDITED BY THE IRS

For many non-profits, the news that they are being audited by the IRS causes a flutter of trepidation.

Did we make a mistake? Will we owe a huge bill to the IRS once it's all over?

While it's easy to understand the dread one might feel upon being notified of an upcoming audit, it's important to understand that an audit isn't an automatic guarantee of bad news. In fact, some audits have even resulted in a higher tax refund! At the end of the day, an audit is just a thorough examination of your taxes.

Knowing what to expect can make this frustrating process less concerning. The IRS will first ask for all supporting documentation for your taxes; then they will set up an in-person meeting with you to review their findings. You are more than welcome to have your attorney, tax preparer, or even your accountant present at the meeting.

After the review and the appointment, the end result is simply that the IRS may modify the amount of the taxes you owe or that are owed to you. Additionally, if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the audit, you have the option to appeal the decision.

IRS Publication 556 provides more specific information on audits. If you have further questions, please call our offices.



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 government 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



When I was in seventh grade, I was very puzzled by the concept of infinity. I asked my teacher why there is no highest number, to which he replied, "No matter what number you name, I can add one to it and achieve a larger number." The concept is still amazing to me, along with the thought of eternity. God has planned

for His children to live with Him for all eternity, an infinite amount of time with no ending number!

Isaiah 55:8-9 explains the puzzle completely: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

God is surely not on the same wavelength as we are in our thinking. It is useless to try to understand or explain His ways as we live our lives. To ask, "Why did God allow this? Why didn't God change that? Why does He allow such sickness, or poverty, or destruction?" results from a failure to understand the Bible's explanation of God's ways. Life is just not comprehensible to our feeble minds compared to God's. He planned all our lives in His way, not ours, and His ways are perfect and totally in His will.

Scientists cannot measure the height of the heavens or the distance from earth to the outermost galaxies, but those numbers are definitely amazing! Such is our God's infinite love as He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior, so we who have accepted this wonderful gift of eternal life can live with Him in Heaven for all eternity, an infinite amount of time with no ending number!

May we truly trust today in the infinite and holy God Who loves us beyond measure!

—Excerpt from Glorianne Gibbs' newest book, *It's All About Him*, scheduled for release in February 2024.

- 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 consulting to local, state, and federal officials and legislators to provide maximum religious liberty
- Intercessory prayer ministry for requests sent to the ministry offices
- Free legal help to homeschooling families
- Prayer initiative for our national leadership and government
- Legal seminars for ministries to help prevent lawsuits
- Preaching in churches across the country

PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYER



These requests are a small sampling of those we have received in recent weeks. We covet your prayers for these and hundreds of others that come to us on a regular basis.

MISSOURI: Pray for God to give CLA's attorneys and a church wisdom as the church navigates a difficult financial situation.

FLORIDA: Pray for attorneys currently helping a church negotiate legal resolutions with a contractor who did not fulfill a work agreement.

FLORIDA: Pray for CLA's attorneys advising a pastor in a fight to keep the church property from being taken by eminent domain laws. The city is attempting to rezone the property and use it for a beach. Pray that God will divinely intervene!

NEW YORK: Pray for wisdom as a pastor seeks legal counsel regarding who can work and help at their men's recovery home ministry.

MINNESOTA: Please pray earnestly for CLA's legal team as it stands with a pastor and his church as they oppose a city ordinance change that would allow a bar to move in beside the church.

OHIO: Pray for civil resolutions in a possible legal battle for a church that has been trying to minister to someone who is being very disruptive and hostile toward both the pastor and the church. Pray for a peaceful, non-legal resolution to the hostilities and, most importantly, for the salvation of the individual.

TEXAS: Pray for a Christian who is working with CLA to start a Christian-based literacy book club in her local public school.

MICHIGAN: Pray for wisdom for a young student and his father whom CLA's legal team is advising as they address public school leaders regarding the student's right to witness to his fellow students.

WASHINGTON: Pray for a peaceful resolution for a Christian woman who is being mistreated at her workplace because of her Biblical beliefs.

ILLINOIS: Please pray for a Christian who called our ministry because he is dealing with censorship of his Biblical faith on social media. Many churches and ministries are constantly being reported and censored unjustly for simply sharing a Biblical message.

MISSOURI: Please pray for CLA attorneys helping a pastor as he meets with public school officials in his community on behalf of a student who was told to stop reading her Bible during free time, a Constitutionally protected right.

NEW MEXICO: Please pray for a situation where a Christian sought CLA's assistance because he was recently asked, when a parent complained, to stop hosting a Bible club in the local public school where he has been doing outreach for nearly a year.

MINNESOTA: Please pray for boldness for a pastor who called CLA after he was contacted by the city and told to immediately stop a Bible study that he hosts in his home.

MARYLAND: Pray for a pastor who called CLA's legal team as they work with the state to negotiate the need for compliance with regulations in relation to the church's Christian school.

FLORIDA: Please pray for safety and wisdom for CLA attorneys advising a Christian school as it properly and legally handles a concerning situation with a student and threats that were made.

GEORGIA: Pray for a swift resolution for a group of teenagers that CLA's team of attorneys is assisting legally who have been told they cannot wear clothing with a religious message to their high school classes, while other students are allowed to wear comparable clothing without discrimination.

WEST VIRGINIA: Pray for a college student who called our ministry for legal assistance as he addresses his school with regard to inappropriate literature in the school library and also opting out of a project that goes against his beliefs. Unfortunately, materials in public schools are currently one of the most legally contested venues for religious freedom.

FLORIDA: Pray for wisdom for Christian school leaders seeking legal guidance about guardian programs and the accompanying liabilities.

NEW JERSEY: Pray as CLA's legal staff helps a pastor who has been contacted by his local health department with a request for weekly information regarding private information about the students at his Christian school. Pray for great wisdom for the pastor and the school leaders as they give an appropriate response and our attorneys as they advise them.

CALIFORNIA: Pray for a Christian requesting assistance from our attorneys as she kindly and respectfully submits a religious accommodation request for her workplace due to her beliefs.

CLA
CHRISTIAN LAW ASSOCIATION

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