

A still life arrangement of autumn harvest items including pumpkins, corn, grapes, and berries in a wooden crate. The scene is set against a warm, orange-brown background. The items are arranged in a wooden crate, with a woven basket visible on the right. The lighting is soft and warm, highlighting the textures of the pumpkins, corn, and grapes.

*Happy
Thanksgiving!*

THE **LEGAL**
ALERT

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MAKING FUN EVENTS LEGALLY SAFE

Fall festivals and games are a timeless and wonderful outreach for churches, but all those fun activities and games can cause minor bumps and bruises—and sometimes major accidents. As you are organizing your games, one of the factors that should be taken into consideration is the physical safety of the participants. You might ask questions like, “Should this activity be limited to people of a certain age?” and “Would someone likely get hurt if he were not athletically fit?” Games that may seem fun and exciting during planning often have the potential for major physical liability risk. It is not possible to overstate the importance of being mindful of any games or activities that have the potential for people to hurt themselves.

As you register attendees for your event, our attorneys strongly recommend that you include a liability release form for higher risk activities. You will want to remember that parents or legal guardians must sign for minors. If you expect a large number of minors to attend without their parents, you will have to carefully pre-plan the signing of these liability release forms.

In some cases, liability release forms can be completed online, but this is not always true. If you do want to proceed with online forms, most states require you to establish legally valid security procedures so there is an effective method of verifying who is actually signing the release form.

The Christian Law Association welcomes calls and questions about this matter. Especially if you are new to using liability release forms, we recommend you contact our office to obtain specific information that can be useful in your state and for the particular activities that you have. We have templates that can be modified for use by your ministry, and we are happy to provide you with these resources.



As our nation celebrates a national day of Thanksgiving this month, we at the Christian Law Association want to express our gratitude for the incredibly kind support we receive from Godly, patriotic Americans who understand the importance of protecting religious liberty in this great land. Our legal missionaries labor tirelessly to help churches and Christian ministries that cannot help themselves, and we know that our work would be impossible without the sacrificial gifts of God’s people. We pray that you and your family will have a blessed Thanksgiving season!



REMOTE CONSULTATIONS AVAILABLE



CLA attorneys Seth Kraus and Jonathan Gibbs meeting by Zoom with a church board about a legal matter.



THE DUTY OF THANKSGIVING

Though we may sometimes get an exaggerated sense of our national difficulties, we cannot deny that America faces serious challenges that must be addressed. But in the midst of contemplating our national difficulties and what we can do to make things better, we must never lose our sense of thanksgiving. It is our duty to be a thankful people of prayer.

The Christian Law Association is thankful for the privilege we have of fighting legal battles that protect and promote religious liberty, for the prayers our legal missionaries receive from Godly people across the nation, and for the sacrificial gifts we receive from Christians who desire to preserve religious liberty in this great land.

May we never forget our first president's remark that thankfulness is our duty.

When George Washington, the first President of the United States, issued his Thanksgiving Proclamation in 1789, he mentioned that “it is the duty of all Nations... to be grateful” for God’s benefits. In this statement, Washington clearly places the act of thanksgiving in the category of obligation. Being thankful is not something we do when we happen to feel the emotion of gratitude. It is our job, our duty, our responsibility to be grateful.

The Psalmist exhorted the people of the Old Testament to “Come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms” (Psalm 95:2). And the New Testament instructs God’s people to “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6).

In our day-to-day work here at the Christian Law Association, we deal with endless cases in the battle for religious liberty. It would be easy to feel hopeless or cynical about the justice system in America. Yet we understand that it is our duty—yea, we are commanded—to be thankful.

Every American should be thankful for the Christian foundation of our nation. Though America has wandered far from her Christian heritage, our constitutional government still provides protections that protect religious liberty, even when wins sometimes require lengthy court cases. We should be thankful that religious liberty is enshrined in the Constitution, meaning that we can still meet freely and openly to worship the Lord as the Bible commands.

Americans can be grateful for the material provisions of our Lord. When our economic conditions take a slight dip, it is still easier to live in America than in many nations of this world. And when our dollar doesn’t go as far as it used to, we still live in a bountiful land where food is not scarce. All of this is because of God’s gracious hand of blessing and protection, for which we should be profoundly thankful.

In Abraham Lincoln’s Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1864, he urged Americans to “humble themselves in the dust” and from that self-imposed lowly position offer “penitent and fervent prayers and supplications.” Lincoln’s statement does not indicate that we should be humble when we happen to feel like it. Instead, it acknowledges that we have a duty to humble ourselves and to pray for our nation with a spirit of thanksgiving.

GEORGE WASHINGTON’S THANKSGIVING PROCLAMATION OF 1789

Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor—and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.

Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be—That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks—for his kind care and protection of the People of this Country previous to their becoming a Nation...for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed...and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.

And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions....





SHARING THE GOSPEL AT GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED EVENTS

We are thankful to live in a nation that still allows us to share the Gospel message. Yet, we understand that there are reasonable limits to how we express ourselves. For example, no one would think it reasonable to proclaim a message on loudspeakers at three o'clock in the morning in a quiet residential neighborhood. It is important for Christians to understand the nuances of the law in this matter.

The most protected forum for witnessing is known as the public forum. Citizens have virtually guaranteed access to a traditional public forum, which includes public streets, sidewalks, parks, and other places where citizens traditionally gather to exchange ideas. The United States Supreme Court has ruled that "Such use of the streets and public places has, from ancient times, been a part of the privileges, immunities, rights, and liberties of citizens. The privilege of a citizen of the United States to use the streets and parks for communication of views... must not... be abridged or denied."



Please contact us if you are interested in bookstore rates for our printed resources.

While protecting free speech in public forums, the Supreme Court also ruled that free speech must work together with "peace and good order." First Amendment free speech rights are not considered to be harmed if regulations about time, place, and manner are adopted by appropriate governmental agencies. For example, the Court allows municipalities to disallow public speech after 10:00 P.M., in the middle of a street, or above a certain decibel level.

Limitations on free speech become more difficult to understand when you consider places that are not part of the traditional public forum. For example, do owners of private property have the right to limit who speaks on their property? Can speakers have unlimited access to military bases? Are there restrictions for distributing Gospel tracts in shopping malls?

One faithful lady wanted to distribute tracts at a government-sponsored children's event, but she was not sure if was permissible. As it turned out in this particular case, the event was sponsored by the government, but it was a public event that allowed all people to share ideas and distribute information.

If you have questions about your right to witness, you may want to read our resource titled *Witnessing in Modern America*, in which our attorneys spell out the details of the law. And always feel free to contact our offices if you need clarification about this detailed issue. The legal missionaries of the Christian Law Association are privileged to help you exercise your right to witness, and we will continue our work to ensure that the Gospel message can be circulated freely in this great land.

FROM ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S THANKSGIVING PROCLAMATION OF 1864

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do hereby appoint and set apart the last Thursday in November next as a day which I desire to be observed by all my fellow-citizens, wherever they may then be, as a day of thanksgiving and praise

to Almighty God, the beneficent Creator and Ruler of the Universe. And I do further recommend that on that occasion they do reverently humble themselves in the dust and from thence offer up penitent and fervent prayers

and supplications to the Great Disposer of Events for a return of the inestimable blessings of peace, union, and harmony throughout the land which it has pleased Him to assign as a dwelling place for ourselves and for our posterity throughout all generations.



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

ARE YOUR DRIVING RECORDS UP TO DATE?



Churches, Christian schools, and other Christian ministries constantly transport people. Some provide bus transportation to church. Some provide van transportation to activities. Unless we are careful, we can easily let an important recordkeeping requirement slip.

Suppose an accident occurs involving a ministry vehicle. In many, or most, cases, a lawsuit will be filed. If this happens and it can be shown that a ministry did not take careful steps to ensure they were using safe, qualified drivers, a judge or jury could impose severe fines on the ministry.

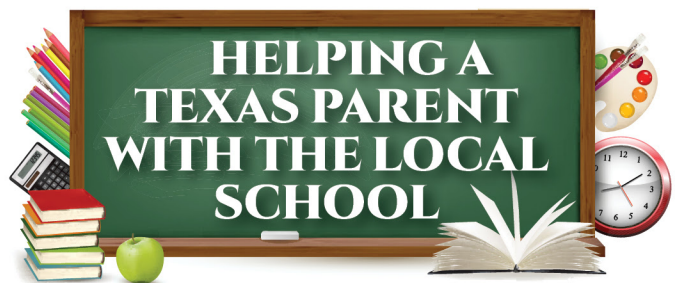
To begin, every ministry should obtain a copy of the commercial driver's license (CDL) of every driver who operates a vehicle that requires a CDL. They should also obtain a copy of the driver's license for every driver that operates a ministry vehicle (even if that vehicle does not require a CDL), and they should obtain a copy of the driver's license for every driver who uses his own vehicle in service of the ministry. In addition, ministries should obtain a seven-year driving record for each person who drives on behalf of the ministry.

When a ministry can demonstrate that all its drivers have up-to-date licenses and good driving records, that ministry is much less likely to be fined for negligence in the event of an accident. If you have questions specific to your situation, please call our attorneys for advice.

DR. GIBBS AND STEVE KLUTH



As we travel across the nation preaching in churches and representing Christians who are enduring religious persecution, we are always cognizant of the great need for the prayers of God's people. We covet your prayer support as we fight to preserve the America of our forefathers.



An eighth-grade student in a Texas public school was given a reading assignment that violated his family's religious beliefs, and the parents were unsure of how to proceed. Our attorneys advised the parents to find another reading assignment of equal difficulty and recommend it as an alternative assignment, explaining to the teacher that they were requesting a religious accommodation. In most cases, schools are required to offer an "opt out" activity. In those cases when the teacher does not cooperate, parents may need to speak with the school principal or with the school board.



PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYER

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

ALABAMA: Pray for a pastor with questions regarding the Fair Labor Standards Act. Many churches seek CLA's guidance on this act, and it's important to know how it affects your church. If you are in a position of church leadership, contact us at any time to get your questions answered.

TEXAS: Pray for a Christian seeking guidance as he considers starting a ministry to assist people with housing after natural disasters.

NORTH CAROLINA: Pray for this pastor and others like him who contacted our office regarding handling disruptive students. Ministering to difficult children is important, but must be done in a safe manner. CLA attorneys can offer direction regarding potential methods a pastor or school administrator can employ, as we did in this case.

ILLINOIS: Pray for a pastor who called our attorneys after having ongoing issues with the IRS dunning the church for nonpayment yet failing to send requested documentation.

MICHIGAN: Pray for a pastor who was contacted by CPS about interviewing one of his Christian school students. The pastor sought our attorneys' help, which we were glad to provide. Please contact our offices if you are uncertain of your legal obligations in situations like this.

IOWA: Pray for a Christian mechanic discussing with our legal team the best way to set up a ministry to assist churches and missionaries with repairs.

LOUISIANA: Pray for a church board that recently discovered funds were embezzled by a former member. CLA attorneys were able to advise the board about how to address the congregation and also move forward in dealing with the situation.

CALIFORNIA: Pray for a Christian who sought direction after being told to remove Gospel tracts from his desk at work. Our attorneys offered guidance. Please be sure you understand your rights in the workplace; reach out to CLA if you aren't sure of what is allowed.

FLORIDA: Pray for a vice principal who contacted CLA about responding to a court order involving a family in their Christian school.

OHIO: Pray for a pastor who reached out to us for our attorneys' input on how to approach political issues with his church congregation and legally share some of his thoughts on different matters in the church bulletin.

PENNSYLVANIA: Pray for a pastor who contacted our legal team regarding the best way to handle reimbursements for members who purchase materials for church ministries and events.

NORTH CAROLINA: Pray for a church that requested direction as they establish their food pantry as its own 501(c)(3) as it continues to grow and serve their community.

INDIANA: An attorney reached out to CLA attorneys for assistance as he helps a missions group get properly registered as a nonprofit in their state, and we were honored to respond. Please pray for fruitful outreach for this ministry.

MASSACHUSETTS: Pray for a Christian who reached out to our attorneys as he considers passing out free Bibles. We provided our resources on witnessing in public and private areas.

OKLAHOMA: Pray for a Christian man with a foundation who asked CLA for guidance as he considers opening a larger center with a church.

OHIO: Pray for a Christian in his nineties who contacted our attorneys for advice as he works with a pastor on holding revivals and gospel music events at a church. You are never too old to serve the Lord!


MINNESOTA: Pray for a Christian mother who contacted our offices with concerns for her children's religious rights in their public school. CLA attorneys were able to answer her questions. Christian students cannot be silenced in public schools regarding their faith in all situations; please contact our office if you have questions about these laws.

MICHIGAN: Pray for a Christian who sought guidance from CLA about witnessing to college students by offering tracts on public sidewalks.

WEST VIRGINIA: Pray for a retired pastor who offers biblical counseling and called our offices to find out how a new law might affect his counseling practices due to his Biblical beliefs. Our attorneys were able to advise him; we urge extreme caution in this area to avoid personal liability.

VIRGINIA: Pray for healing for a young Christian woman who was seriously injured in an accident. Her pastor contacted us for advice on handling donations to help the family financially, and we were privileged to assist.

GRATEFUL FOR PRAYER WARRIORS



Tom Stokes is blind. He spends his days calling people and praying with them. This wonderful Christian man has called the Christian Law Association EVERY day for more than 15 years now to pray over the cases we handle, and we are so grateful.