

Guest opinion: Conservative churches need to speak out on issues

DICK PENCE Friday May 21, 2021

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Gazette Photo Capitol Rotunda

Montana Legislators Expose the Silent Church

Most conservative churches refuse to engage in so-called political issues. Are protecting the unborn, marriage, or religious liberty political issues – or - have they *entered the political arena because the church refused to engage them?*

The word church (ekklesia) means “those who are the called-out ones.” St. Paul says they are to “come out from among them and be separate” – be salt and light

influencing society. When this ceases to define an organization, it is no longer a Christian church.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said *“Silence in the face of evil is evil, not to speak is to speak.”* If a Christian organization refuses to speak for LIFE and biblical marriage, it is a social organization, not an orthodox Christian church. This circumvention is sin and if we support these organizations with our resources - especially our children - then we are complicit. The remedy is repentance!

When the Democratic Platform turned Marxist-socialist, churches were silent. Social Justice Theory has become a religion with *deep theological roots*. It has spawned Critical Race Theory with its surrogates like Black Lives Matter. Even our Montana Office of Public Instruction has labeled these ideas as “fringe”. Instead of countering these ideologies with sound scholarship, many churches are joining their ranks.

The church has long been late to conversations on issues from slavery and civil rights to no-fault divorce and same-sex marriage. It gives these issues lip service, still clinging to the mantra *‘the church has no business in politics’* and refuses to teach on them. Barna Research reveals that believers want these subjects addressed but we continue to hear only silence from the pulpit.

It has been individual Christians and organizations they support that have engaged. Are these issues the responsibility of Alliance Defending Freedom, Focus on The Family, or the Montana Family Foundation? Or, do these issues rightfully fall under the purview of the church? A pastor recently admitted, *if I taught against abortion, many would leave my church*. Is this compromise really about numbers and dollars?

One legislator commented:

“The big issues of this hour - and not one sermon on them. Critical Race Theory, Black Lives Matter, riots, WOKE, intersectionality etc. – what does Scripture say to address this? The church lives in a vacuum while the LEFT wins the cultural war.”

Another legislator observed:

"I do wish the MT Pastors Network was viable. We could have used their support in the legislative session. The cultural battle today is in the legislatures and the courts. Sadly, the church is not involved in either. The Left has their full-time lobbyists that build rapport with legislators. That is difficult to counter. We need biblical lobbyists working the Capitol halls daily. Churches will send tens of thousands of dollars to foreign missionaries, but won't send one to the legislature for four months."

This legislator referenced the inactive Montana Pastor's Network, formed to stand for LIFE, Marriage, and Religious Liberty.

Should it be the responsibility of legislators to address these issues? In the 67th session they did. The Montana Family Foundation lists 17 conservative bills that passed - supporting LIFE, religious liberty, free speech, women's sports, etc. They list 11 good bills that died. How much more could have been done with the support of the church

An informed Christians asked me, *isn't same sex marriage a political issue?* You know where they get such ideas! Informed by the culture, our youth have embraced same-sex marriage while the church has been silent.

Should we continue to invest our resources in organizations that are increasingly complicit with the dictates of the Progressives? Is it time for a serious look at how we do church in America? In New Testament times, they withstood persecution partially because the churches were not institutions reliant on seeker-friendly support but on commitment to orthodoxy supported by "Scripture" alone.

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