



GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH
POLITICAL ACTIVITY
POSITION PAPER

POSITION P-10
Adopted: 5/1/2001
Revised: 3/19/2013
Revised : 7/1/2015
Reviewed: 1/28/22

The Church's Mission

GCC's first and foremost responsibility is to obey Jesus Christ, since He is the creator and Lord of the church (Mt. 16:18-19; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). We will pursue His mission for His church, as commanded in the Bible (Mt. 22:36-40; 28:18-20) and summarized in Grace's mission statement:

We are committed to LOVING GOD passionately, LOVING PEOPLE genuinely, REACHING PEOPLE deliberately and DEVELOPING PEOPLE spiritually.

The Christian's First Allegiance

A Christian's primary allegiance and identity is derived from their union with Jesus Christ and their citizenship in heaven. (Phil 3:20; I Pet. 2:9-12) As members of Christ's church, they are called to represent the Lord Jesus with moral integrity and compassion (Col. 3:17; 4:2-6; I Th. 4:11-12; Tit. 2:11-15) to influence others to fear God and follow Christ. (Matt. 5:13-16; Phil. 2:14-17; I Pet. 2:9-12) They are biblically responsible to their current human governments. (Rom. 13:1-7; I Tim. 2:1-6; Tit. 3:1-8) They are to honor authorities, pray for them, pay taxes, etc.

The Christian's Duty to Human Government

While civic and political activity cannot convert human government into God's rule (Jn. 18:36), the Christian affirms that the current governmental structures exist under God's sovereignty to promote justice and mercy and restrain and punish lawlessness and injustice. (Rom. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13-17) In our country's government, Christians have a responsibility to live as good citizens and to participate in the governmental process. This definitely includes prayer for our country and governmental leaders, paying taxes, and informed voting. Biblically informed citizens should pursue and support people, laws, policies, etc. that best accomplish justice, mercy, and respect for God's sovereignty, the dignity of human life and responsible stewardship of temporal resources for the common good. While every Christian should pray, pay taxes and vote, others can be led to more involved participation, including petitioning, campaigning, running for office, etc.

The Church Leadership's Responsibility to Church Members

Equipping

The Church Elders are called to provide equipping for the members so they can carry out their responsibilities as Christians under Christ's Lordship in every sphere of life. (Eph. 4:11-16) We believe this includes functioning as citizens under our current government.



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This equipping can include:

1. Prayer. (I Tim. 2:1-6; II Th. 3:1-5)
2. Forums, classes and personal counsel where political issues can be discussed from a biblical, Christian perspective.
3. Teaching and preaching from an Elder consensus on a biblical perspective on relevant issues so the congregation can pray and participate in their civic duty from a biblically informed perspective.

Maintaining Unity in the Congregation as a Whole

The Elders have a biblical mandate to lead the congregation to maturity, and pursue a family atmosphere where those who differ in application of the truth have the freedom to exercise their conscience in their civic duty. (Eph. 4:3, 4:13, 4:15)

Allowing Legitimate Diversity among Individual Members of the Congregation

We understand that on certain issues which may arise in the political/social arena that not all members will be in complete agreement with each other. The responsibility of leadership in these instances is to allow people the option of believing and acting according to their biblically educated consciences, and to foster an atmosphere of dialogue and acceptance where people can explore together appropriate responses to political questions. (E.g., Rom. 14)

Note: We are fully aware that positions (and people) which seem, on the face of it, to be very clearly in line with a biblical position, can often turn out to be less than they seemed when consequences (and truth) are finally known.

The Church's Responsibility to the Government

The Church is responsible to maintain good faith with the government regarding our tax-exempt status as outlined below.

1. ***Regarding Endorsement of Candidates.*** The church *cannot*, as an organization, advocate specific candidates in an election, without incurring the loss of its tax-exempt status. Under IRS rules, most 501(c) (tax-exempt) organizations can budget part of their funds for lobbying activities (under section 501(h) of the Internal Revenue Code) if they are appropriately registered with the IRS. Churches and private foundations, however, are exempt from this provision. (For tax purposes, lobbying activities are defined as any attempt to influence voters, or a defined segment of voters, toward a specific vote). Despite current or future IRS allowances, it is not the policy of Grace Community Church to endorse individual candidates or parties.

2. ***Regarding initiatives, referendums, ballot questions and propositions.*** Where these touch on critical moral issues, the church may speak freely - including outright endorsement or opposition - since this is not considered political activity by the IRS, as long as the total sum of these activities does not reflect a “substantial part” of the church’s overall activity.**
3. ***Regarding Distribution of political literature.*** The church building or property cannot be used during church-sponsored events (which would give the appearance of official church sanction) for political activities such as soliciting signatures for petitions. Church members are encouraged to use other social occasions (special meetings, small group contacts, informal get-togethers, etc.) to discuss and carry forward with such activities. While the law provides guidelines for distribution of political literature on church property, the Elders believe it is wisest at this point to restrict this activity.
4. ***Regarding Potential Removal of Privileges.*** There might come a time when our government steps outside its God-given jurisdiction and attempts to restrict or prohibit Christ’s church from proclaiming God’s truth. Loss of tax-exempt status, or other privileges, rights or freedoms might be a consequence. In that event, Grace will join with the vast majority of churches and Christians throughout the ages that have suffered persecution for their faith. (I Pet. 3:13-18) Regardless of a human government’s stance towards the ministry of the church, we are called by Christ to live responsible lives (I Th. 4:11-12), pray for protection from wicked authorities (II Th. 3:1-5), pray for those in authority to honor God by providing a peaceful, lawful community where the church has freedom to minister openly. (I Tim. 2:1-6) Knowing that Christ is Lord over all authorities, and will judge them according to their stewardship and treatment of God’s people, Christ’s church must remain faithful to bless those who persecute them and to witness to the power of the Gospel.

Guiding Principles

The Elders caution temperance and love in all these activities, lest disunity be spread within the church family. While it is right to champion a righteous cause, and wrestle with issues vigorously, it is wrong to become judgmental towards other Christians because they hold opposing views.



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We are commanded to do good and to seek justice and righteousness as the body of Christ and as citizens of the kingdom. Jesus, declared that while His kingdom is not from this world it impacts our life in this world. The commission to make disciples means bringing people into the kingdom as well as equipping them to be good citizens of the world. We are in constant danger of over emphasizing either evangelism or justice issues to the neglect of the other. The commission to make disciples means bringing people into the kingdom as well as equipping them to be good citizens of the world. (Matt. 28:16-20; Acts 1:8; Isa. 1:16-20; Matt. 25:31-46; 1 John 3:14-18; James 2:14-18)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

The Church's Mission

Matt. 16:18-19 “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Eph. 1: 22-23 “And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

Col. 1: 18 “And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy.”

Matt. 22: 36-40 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Matt. 28: 18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The Christian's First Allegiance

Phil. 3: 20 “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ...”

I Pet. 2: 9-12 “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

Col. 3: 17 “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”



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- Col. 4: 2-6** “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”
- I Th. 4: 11-12** “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”
- Titus 2: 11-15** “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.”
- Matt. 5: 13-16** " You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”
- Phil. 2: 14-17** “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life - in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.”
- I Pet. 2:9-12** (See above)
- Rom. 13:1-7** “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will

commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.”

I Tim. 2:1-6 “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men, the testimony given in its proper time.”

Titus 3:1-8 “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.”

The Christian’s Duty to Human Government

John 18: 36 “Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.’”

Rom. 13:1-7 (See above)

I Pet. 2:13-17 “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men, whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil, live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone, love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, and honor the king.”



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Eph. 4: 11-16 "It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

I Tim. 2:1-6 (See Above)

II Th. 3:1-5 "Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance."

Eph. 4: 3 "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

Eph. 4:13, 15 (See Above)

The Church's Responsibility to the Government

I Pet. 3: 13-18 "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear, do not be frightened." But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit..."

I Thess. 4:11-12; II Thess. 3:1-5; I Tim. 2:1-6 (See Above)