



THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY

How Can the Church Help Congregants Navigate Political Discourse?

Option 1:

The Church as Refuge

The church should refrain from taking political stances to create a sanctuary where people come together to worship regardless of political lines.

| POSSIBLE ACTIONS | DRAWBACKS |
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| Members of the church may engage in their own political activity, but church funds and resources should not be used to host political discussions. | Defining what is political activity may be confusing and may limit the programming and ministries of the church. |
| Churches should develop social media policies to limit political commentary and statements from church leaders. | Social media is a primary way to engage people. Limiting online expression may limit the ability to communicate the Gospel. |
| Any direct political statement should be vetted by denominational authority or church leadership. | Pastors may feel restricted applying faith to practice, resulting in a watering down of the gospel. |
| Pastors should refrain from directly taking political stands in sermons. | The absence of a statement by the church may limit the ability for the church to walk alongside members. |
| What are other ideas? | What are other drawbacks? |

Option 2:

The Church as Mediator

The church should promote healing and understanding across divisions and teach skills to engage with different perspectives, listen to marginalized voices, and be agents of reconciliation.

| POSSIBLE ACTIONS | DRAWBACKS |
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| Churches should foster exploration of diverse perspectives and allow open discussion from clergy, staff, and lay leaders. | Exploring diverse perspectives may increase divisiveness in the church. |
| Church leadership should be trained in dialogue and deliberation to enhance their ability to facilitate divisive conversations and mediate conflict. | Listening to other voices, particularly those outside the church, could compromise our unity of identity. |
| Create sessions to explore issues and experiences of individuals or communities within the church. | Not all points of view are reconcilable to Christian faith. How does the church decide when reconciliation is appropriate? |
| Encourage one another, sharing our "spiritual biographies," experiences when we felt God's presence or absence. | A posture of reconciliation may mitigate our ability to confront evil or withstand cultural pressures. |
| What are other ideas? | What are other drawbacks? |

Option 3:

The Church as Prophetic Voice

The church should be a prophetic voice in the midst of tensions. Responsibilities of the church include speaking to political issues, pursuing justice, and advocating for righteousness.

| POSSIBLE ACTIONS | DRAWBACKS |
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| Churches should address public issues in sermons, teaching, and ministries of the congregation. | Churches may alienate those who disagree with the stances. Angry members may withdraw. |
| Leaders should be trained in advocacy and activism to enhance their ability to lead congregants in public witness and action. | Churches may be seen more as political actors than faith actors, compromising their witness in the public square. |
| Hold forums on denominational social statements and encourage action in their local community. | Churches may draw criticism, protests, and even retaliatory measures for publicly enacting their values. |
| Create partnerships with other congregations or secular organizations in order to address systemic injustices and promote the work of justice. | Churches may be asked to partner with agencies that do not align with the Christian faith or to work within community constraints that limit the church's prophetic witness. |
| What are other ideas? | What are other drawbacks? |

How do we bring our faith & morality to bear without further widening the gap between people who hold different political views?