

PASTORPEDIA™

Cutting Edge Conversations for Pastors and Church Leaders

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Politics and government: when to say something

We have a King plus “Caesar”!

“We have no king but Caesar!” is the original quote, a loud shout from the religious leaders to Pilate when he asked if he should crucify their king (John 19:15).

But we do. As citizens of our country we have a double obligation, and at times must choose to deal with higher issues than political parties and candidates. “We deal with higher issues,” was my standard answer when good people asked me, the pastor, to say more about their favored candidate or at least to give out the voting guide obviously weighted in that candidate’s favor.

It was not always well received.

And it is especially hard if one of the candidates seems to embrace moral or biblical issues much more than the other!

Now here we are, not many weeks away from a very important election in our country and in our local areas. Shall we endorse or even campaign? How shall we pray up front? Can we have signs in our yard? What do we do when some parts of a movement seem so very Christian but other “planks” contradict the teachings of our King?

Maybe our thoughts out loud will help you. It is not always easy.

Thoughtfully,

Knute, Jeff, and Jim

What is the elephant in the room?

Jeff Bogue

- People want you to pick a side.
- As pastors we need to remember that we are not talking to a homogenized group of people. Just because they come to our church, or because they follow Christ, does not mean they share our political views. So, our job is to lead them closer to Christ not closer to a given political view.

Jim Brown

- Every single day COVID-19 is in the room and we must embrace it.
 - We can't allow the pandemic to cause disunity, because that is exactly what the devil wants to happen!
- Never be afraid to address the elephant but make sure it doesn't move you off mission.
- I always encourage our staff to read the local newspaper so that we can be a church that is in the community and for the community. It would be a tragedy if we were unaware of current events in our community and world.
- We recently needed to take a Sunday and have a conversation about racism in order to show that we care and long to better understand the issue at hand.
- Social media is a hot spot that reveals the elephant in the room.
- Always point people to Jesus and never let the elephant in the room consume you!

Knute Larson

- Trump or not Trump. We need to face that many Christians are connected with him and his policies and feel like every other believer should be. I don't think it's a good standard, but it is real.
- The desire for many is for the pastor or church policymakers to be supportive in a public way.

It might show up in the plea to distribute conservative or bias voter guides, or to pray more in the worship service, or just give some support, which in their minds seems obviously needed. They watch other pastors do this nationally.
- Another challenge is to know what moral issues to address in a sermon, especially where the texts seem clearly related. This can be taken as a political party affiliation or support. For instance, everyone knows that one party is more against abortions than the other.

I believe this is a huge area where the board, as the guardian of the boundaries of the church, and the pastor, as the spiritual leader, must agree and make a clear policy.
- The fact that many churches do endorse candidates very publicly, may make your people wonder why you hesitate. Is that an elephant in the room or a donkey? 😊

When should we bring up issues?

Jeff Bogue

- When the issues are moral issues or spiritual issues as opposed to political ones.

Jim Brown

- When it is on your doorstep and needs attention.
- When people are being led down a wrong path.
- Before it gains a foothold by the enemy.
- After we have prayed and sought godly wisdom on the issue at hand.
- Before you think you should!
- Always remember, silence can lead others to think that you are in agreement with the issue at hand.
- People are longing and waiting for your response as their shepherd!

Knute Larson

- When they line up with the policies the pastor and the board just made! 😊
- When they are very clear in the Bible. It is especially appropriate when the text covers the moral issue or is very close to it. For instance, “You shall not murder” would call for a statement about abortion or euthanasia.
- In the board meetings when policies and church stances are discussed.
- In staff meetings, where healthy and biblical discussion and argument should take place.
- When they are very hot topics in the news or on the phones that people are holding. If we don't refer to the debates, sometimes people may think we are living in a different world. And I know we are citizens of heaven on earth, but we also must be salt and light while we live here.

How should we pray for government leaders in services?

Jeff Bogue

- Respectfully, in an unbiased and unapologetic way.
- We should pray for them on a consistent basis and ask that God would give them wisdom and discernment.
- We should pray they would be open to how God is leading them and through them.

Jim Brown

- Take a moment in your pastoral prayer, or even in the midst of your sermon.
- Schedule prayer meetings with your church and offer a church-wide fast to lift up government officials.
- Specifically pray for wisdom, clarity, courage, and understanding.
- Pray that God will use them to accomplish His will.

- Pray for them daily and use social media platforms to pray for them and get others to pray.
- Use your influence to point people to Jesus and not to people!

Knute Larson

- Carefully and regularly (though I know that was not the question).
- As 1 Timothy 2:2 clearly commands, for dignity and peace, godliness in their lives, executive orders and congressional decisions, and certainly wisdom. That seems different from praying that a certain one would win an election.
- Here comes a hobby horse: In the planned pastoral prayer, which differs from the guitarist strumming a feeling he had about that last song, I always urge pastors to use the P-R-A-Y (praise, repent or confess, ask, yield) model in their pastoral prayer and to teach that as a suggested guide for families and groups. (See our paper on how to use it in groups.)

This keeps individuals in groups, families, and staff meetings involved and not checked out as someone prays a long, long prayer, albeit sincerely.

Pastorpedia is a resource provided to you by CE National, a church effectiveness ministry. Please contact us at cenational@cenational.org or 574.267.6622 if we may be of any help to you or your ministry!

Jeff Bogue, of [Grace Church](#), in several locations in the Bath-Norton-Medina areas of Ohio, and also president of CE National; Jim Brown, of [Grace Community Church](#) in Goshen, Indiana, a church known for its strong growth, family and men's ministries, and community response teams; and [Knute Larson](#), a coach of pastors, who previously led The Chapel in Akron for 26 years. Pastorpedia is brought to you by [CE National](#). Visit cenational.org/pastorpedia for more issues and to read the bios of our contributors.