

THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY

How can the church help congregants navigate political discourse?

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
<p>• 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.</p>	<p>• 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.</p>	<p>• 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.</p>
<p>• Possible Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members of the church may engage in their own political activity, but church funds and resources should not be used to host political discussions. - Churches should develop social media policies to limit political commentary and statements from church leaders. - Any direct political statement should be vetted by denominational authority or church leadership. - Pastors should refrain from directly taking political stands in sermons. - What are other ideas? 	<p>• Possible Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Churches should foster exploration of diverse perspectives and allow open discussion from clergy, staff, and lay leaders. - Church leadership should be trained in dialogue and deliberation to enhance their ability to facilitate divisive conversation and mediate conflict. - Create sessions to explore issues and experiences of individuals or communities within the church. - Encourage one another, sharing our “spiritual biographies,” experiences when we felt God’s presence or absence. - What are other ideas? 	<p>• Possible Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Churches should address public issues in sermons, teaching, and ministries of the congregation. - Leaders should be trained in advocacy and activism to enhance their ability to lead congregants in public witness and action. - Hold forums on denominational social statements and encourage action in their local community. - Create partnerships with other congregations or secular organizations in order to address systemic injustices and promote the work of justice. - What are other ideas?
<p>• Drawbacks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defining what is political activity may be confusing and may limit the programming and ministries of the church. - Social media is a primary way to engage people. Limiting online expressions may limit the ability to communicate the gospel. - Pastors may feel restricted applying faith to practices, resulting in a watering down of the gospel. - The absence of a statement by the church may limit the ability for the church to walk alongside members. - What are other drawbacks? 	<p>• Drawbacks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploring diverse perspectives may increase divisiveness in the church. - Listening to other voices, particularly those outside the church, could compromise our unity of identity. - Not all points of view are reconcilable to Christian faith. How does the church decide when reconciliation is appropriate? - A posture of reconciliation may mitigate our ability to confront evil or withstand cultural pressures. - What are other drawbacks? 	<p>• Drawbacks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Churches may alienate those who disagree with the stances. Angry members may withdraw. - Churches may be seen more as political actors than faith actors, compromising their witness in the public square. - Churches may draw criticism, protests, and even retaliatory measures for publicly enacting their values. - 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 drawbacks?

(Many thanks to Carmen Retzlaff and Mario Garcia Sandoval for translation services.)