



Christian Citizenship

“You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:13-16). One way to be salty and let our light shine is by being good citizens on earth. Our vocation as citizens of both the secular kingdom and God’s kingdom gives us the responsibility to proclaim God’s Word and care for our neighbors. We are called to engage the “public square” with our message of Christ’s mercy for all. Please pray for God’s will to be done... in Jesus’ name.

Court Brief to Prevent Forced Abortion Advertising

The LCMS has joined an amicus brief in a case bound for the U.S. Supreme Court to halt a California law requiring pro-life pregnancy centers to provide free advertising for the abortion industry.

The Synod joins 22 states, 144 members of Congress and numerous other organizations that have filed “friend of the court” briefs with the U.S. Supreme Court in *National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (NIFLA) v. Becerra*. Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) is representing the pregnancy center network NIFLA and two of its centers.

“...No one should be forced to provide free advertising for the abortion industry—least of all pro-life pregnancy centers,” said ADF President, CEO and General Counsel Michael Farris. “Government-compelled expression strikes at the very heart of constitutionally protected liberties.”

Farris will argue the case before the high court on behalf of NIFLA and the two centers. At issue is whether the disclosures required by the California Reproductive FACT Act, AB 775, violate the protections set forth in the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment, applicable to the states through the 14th Amendment.

According to ADF’s case details, the California law compels pro-life pregnancy care centers to provide free advertising for the abortion industry by requiring licensed medical centers that offer free, pro-life care for pregnant women to post a

disclosure saying that California provides free or low-cost abortion and contraception services.

The mandated disclosure must also include a phone number for a county office that refers women to Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit upheld a federal district judge’s decision to allow the law to remain in effect while the legal challenge proceeds. ADF attorneys are asking the Supreme Court to reverse that ruling, halt the law and affirm that compelling the centers to provide advertising contrary to their core mission is a violation of their constitutionally protected freedoms. (Source: LCMS Reporter, February 2018)

What can we do? Support the caring pregnancy centers in your community with your prayers and financial donations. Invite them to explain their mission and work to your congregation. In respectful conversations, contrast the policies and teaching of caring pregnancy centers with those of Planned Parenthood.

Please pray that those who defend the lives of unborn children and their mothers be allowed to speak up on their behalf and... in Jesus’ name.

Created Male and Female

LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison and the Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz, executive director of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty, are among 20 religious leaders who have signed an open letter affirming their “commitment to marriage as the union of one man and one woman and as the foundation of society.”

The letter, “Created Male and Female: An Open Letter from Religious Leaders” was released December 15. Among the signers are representatives of the North American Lutheran Church, the Anglican Church in North America, the Orthodox Church in America, the Church of God in Christ, the National Hispanic Christian Leadership

Conference, the Presbyterian Church in America, and the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

The letter promoting “natural marriage” acknowledges that “all human beings are created by God and thereby have an inherent dignity” and that because “God created each person male or female ... sexual difference is not an accident or flaw—it is a gift from God that helps draw us closer to each other and to God. What God created is good.”

The letter notes that “a person’s discomfort with his or her sex, or the desire to be identified as the other sex, is a complicated reality that needs to be addressed with sensitivity and truth,” and recognizes that “each person deserves to be heard and treated with respect; it is our responsibility to respond to their concerns with compassion, mercy and honesty.”

Warning that “children especially are harmed when they are told that they can ‘change’ their sex” or are “given hormones that will affect their development,” the letter calls “false” and “deeply troubling” the notion “that a man can be or become a woman or vice versa. ... It compels people to either go against reason—that is, to agree with something that is not true—or face ridicule, marginalization, and other forms of retaliation.

“We desire the health and happiness of all men, women, and children. Therefore, we call for policies that uphold the truth of a person’s sexual identity as male or female, and the privacy and safety of all,” reads the letter.

Seltz points out that “heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual ... are *our culture’s terms*. Male and female ... are *God’s terms*, even *nature’s terms*. ...To start with our created identity as people of God—male and female—this is the beginning of being able to honor each other, to love each other and yes, even to be tolerant of one another. In this day of confusion, this letter helps guide us in this wonderful endeavor of being truly human for others.” (Source: *blogs.lcms.org*, February 5, 2018)

What can we do? Read God’s Word. Trust the Creator rather than the feelings and opinions of the

created. Read the stories of Rosaria Butterfield, Christopher Yuan, and Walt Heyer. Each left a lesbian, homosexual, or transgender lifestyle when they recognized how they had been deceived and why their identity defined by God matters most. Visit www.christopheryuan.com, www.rosariabutterfield.com, and www.SexChangeRegret.com or WaltHeyer.com.

Please pray for an encouraged and courageous Body of Christ, that we might speak truth in love and... in Jesus’ name.

Christian Student Group Wins Victory at U of I

The University of Iowa must temporarily reinstate a Christian student group after it was punished for denying a leadership role in the group to a gay student. The group, Business Leaders in Christ (BLinC), asked the gay student to accept the club’s statement of faith that opposed homosexuality before assuming the leadership position. Judge Stephanie Marie Rose of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Iowa ruled that BLinC’s request for a preliminary injunction be granted and ordered that the school reinstate the group as a registered campus student organization for at least 90 days.

Eric Baxter, senior counsel with the religious freedom law firm Becket, said, “Every other group on campus gets to select leaders who embrace their mission. Religious groups don’t get second-class treatment.” The campus group Imam Mahdi, for Muslim students, only allows Shia Muslims as members and asks its leaders to “refrain from major sins.” In her decision, Judge Rose noted that the “university does not consistently and equally apply its Human Rights Policy.” U of I issued a statement saying it would adhere to the court’s decision but would not comment on the pending litigation.

BLinC Student President Jacob Estell said, “The university would never let Iowa State’s Cy the Cardinal lead the Hawkeyes. So why would it think it is OK to force religious student groups to select leaders who don’t embrace their mission?”

Please pray for justice... in Jesus’ name.

