

Newsletter 43 Bridging the Church/State Divide March 1, 2026

I was chatting with a colleague regarding my suggestions in the last newsletter about what we can do to right the ship by addressing the two major issues that the voters see, immigration and affordability. Let's take another look.

Since our institutions, from the administration on down through Congress, the Supreme Court, the Department of Justice and other agencies and guardrails are failing us, the ball is back in our hands, we the people. But then I had an additional thought about the one institution that isn't completely failing us, the church. OK, I can hear many of you—"whoa Ted, you're about to go in way over your head." But hear me out. Admittedly my personal experience is limited to Christianity---a Unitarian who attends a Congregational church and is married to a Roman Catholic. But I'm pretty sure based on my Muslim and Jewish friends that what I'm about to expand on applies equally to other faiths.

A recent online mass attended by my wife discussed how to go forward from anger in the world today---the need to come together in spite of differences---we all gain from a global order of peace and freedom---diplomacy is the route to peace not violence. Hearing about this sermon, I could just as well be listening to elected officials and journalists that I admire talking about the disciplines that we all admire. And I realized in my church that the minister continually preaches similar messages that are so timely. There is one difference, however, between what we are taught in church and what we read on the front page of the Times or the Journal---the players are never named in the sermons, as they are in the news. Understandably and based on the Constitution, we have traditionally supported separating politics from church, but I think the time has come to change that, the church being

all that's left of respected institutions and just about the only place aside from schools with a captive audience. Sermons and coffee hour after church when available offer a great opportunity to spread the word and bridge the differences. And, for the young, this could tie in nicely with their civics education in school.

Further, Christianity currently places a huge role in one of our major voting blocs, the MAGA Republicans, most of which are Christians and a good many of which are or describe themselves as Evangelicals. This latter term is somewhat puzzling for many of us, but certainly included in any definition would be belief in the authority of the Bible.

That said, for many Christians, among the most significant passages are "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18-Matthew 22:39) and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you (paraphrased from Matthew and Luke, but also sourced from other religions' scripture)

From my previous newsletters and other sources, you know what I'm getting at. What I have just said is in direct opposition to what the Trump administration, the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security and ICE, supported by some of their Christian nationalist and Evangelical followers, are doing. Under the guise of getting rid of the "worst of the worst" criminal element, they are confronting all undocumented immigrants, refugees with temporary protected status and those going through authorized asylum seeking process as well as some racially profiled citizens, at times breaking into their homes without judicial search warrants, detaining them in camps without adequate food and healthcare, and deporting them to cruel prisons, and in several cases actually killing them without accountability. Many of these immigrants went through extreme hardship to escape persecution or economic misery to reach our border and open a path to

US citizenship, and have lived and worked here becoming valuable productive members of their communities for many years. This is hardly “loving thy neighbor” or “doing unto others as we would have them do unto us.”

And what did most of the rest of us have to do to deserve the rights and privileges of living and working in our great country other than travel through our mother’s birth canal.

As noted by Heather Cox Richardson in one of her recent “Letters from an American” (subscribe, if you do not already do so) particularly egregious was Secretary of Homeland Security Kristy Noem’s attempt to terminate the Temporary Protective Status of 350,000 Haitians living here as a result of the unsafe living conditions in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake. Noem categorized with very derogatory labels and without supporting evidence TPS holders as criminals, disregarding the facts of their high rates of participation in sectors of the labor force badly in need of workers.

Democratic Texas state representative and US Senate primary candidate James Talarico when recently interviewed on TV told late-night host Steven Colbert when referring to any eventual Republican opponent who might be a Christian nationalist “There is nothing Christian about Christian nationalism...It is the worship of power in the name of Christ.”

The leader of all this power is of course Donald Trump. Peter Wehner, a speechwriter who served in the administrations of Reagan, Bush 41 and Bush 43, wrote a recent article in *The Atlantic*, “The Evangelicals Who See Trump’s Viciousness as a Virtue.” In it he claims that Trump presents himself to Christians as a “fierce, even ruthless, warrior on their behalf.”

American Pope Leo XIV and some American bishops are judiciously speaking out against the Trump administration. Some pastors are also doing so, but understandably being cautious in order to keep their congregations united. Other pastors see this as an opportunity for a learning experience and to promote civil discourse on the issues just as some social studies school teachers to whom I have previously alluded do. The church audience now seems ripe for this learning experience. I read from various sources that young people in their 20s, especially young men, are going back to church looking for a more fulfilling life experience. Many of them are motivated by the late and revered Charlie Kirk's Turning Point USA. And just as Independent and unaffiliated voters are a good audience for those of us promoting better treatment of immigrants, all church attending Christians present a similar opportunity. We can each encourage our religious institution to bring the issue more forcefully to the pulpit.

With all this in mind, surely our churches who are already speaking out could start naming at least the transgressor institutions including the administration, the Department of Justice, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, if not the individuals involved, Trump, Pam Bondi, and Kristi Noem. Would this really be any different than naming as a transgressor institution "the money changers" when telling us that Jesus "went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers..." (Matthew 21:12-13)?

To temper concerns with the congregation, priests and other ministers can refer to the teachings of highly respected religious icons like the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr or the recently deceased civil rights activist Reverend Jesse Jackson as their sources, or in some of the more liberal parishes perhaps even the Reverend Al Sharpton.

The veil between church and state can always be pierced by the church. Problems arise when pierced by the state.

Finally, on the issue of immigration, when are the Democrats or a moderate sector of the Republicans going to present an updated comprehensive plan to re-open the borders, encourage and welcome refugees, asylum seekers and others in whatever numbers we require to support our needs---ensuring, of course, adequately manned Border Control Enforcement posted at the borders as originally intended. While we have surrendered our international reputation for welcoming those in need, we can rebuild it. Let's tell the world again "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

In closing, I sat through the State of the Union address for almost two hours. Acting and preaching to his existing base with his usual mixture of accomplishments, exaggerations, and lies, Trump was at his best. To the never Trumpers, he was the same old Trump, and to Independents and undecideds, I don't know. He offered some gross misinformation such as implying that the savings in SNAP costs were the result of many recipients improving their living standards to the point that they no longer require SNAP, whereas in actuality most of the savings resulted simply from his Big Beautiful Bill that deprived deserving recipients from this benefit. Then again, he offered some positives, for example, lower prescription drug prices, big tech paying the total energy costs of their data centers, going after the Mexican drug cartels, and keeping the wealthy corporate speculators from inflating housing prices. But I think he missed the best opportunity he had to combat the affordability issues. Instead of denying that affordability issues exist, he could have announced that he was adjusting the target countries subject to his new round of tariffs and adjusting the amounts in order to use these tariffs primarily to reduce the price of groceries and other household goods to our consumers and reduce the costs of material and

components used by our manufacturers, all with additional special consideration for small businesses.

And finally here's a question you might think about until we meet again in a month.

Is it too much to ask the President of the United States to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed" as called for in Article II Section 3 of the Constitution? He has a bevy of lawyers available to ensure his personal compliance and he has an entire Department of Justice to control his associates' compliance.

Don't forget the next No Kings protest on March 28 even if you must travel a distance.

For comments, further information or requests to unsubscribe, contact me at tedhol@charter.net

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