

Political Advocacy Guidelines

The sword of biblical justice contains both prophetic and compassionate edges, and requires that “People of the Book” respect both. The Free Methodist Discipline provides the attitude and expectation which guides our advocacy: “Our concern for justice is primarily a concern to be just and only secondarily a concern to obtain justice” (BOD ¶3231).

Guiding Principles of for Advocacy

- 1) The Free Methodist Church USA shall neither affiliate with nor tangibly support any particular political party or party candidate.
- 2) Local Free Methodist expressions, be they church plants, fellowships or societies, shall neither affiliate with nor tangibly support any particular political party or party candidate.
- 3) The Free Methodist Church USA strongly supports and encourages its members to be politically informed citizens who actively participate in voting.
- 4) Recognizing that no political party is fully aligned with the values of Kingdom of God, and that various parties offer solid moral reasoning and objectives with which a Christian might agree on the one hand, but clearly unbiblical objectives or means to secure objectives on the other, requires an attitude of love and respect between Free Methodists who individually align with or vote for any particular candidate or party.
- 5) While the Free Methodist Church USA shall not affiliate with any particular political party, individual members of any Free Methodist Church may engage in party politics as their conscience dictates, informed by the theology and practice of the FMCUSA.
- 6) The FMCUSA encourages contemporary church leaders and congregations to continue advocacy and activism around the priorities of Jesus, the Law and Prophets, which are reflected in our Free Methodist heritage and our Discipline (¶3000ff) which include but are not limited to:
 - a. Concern and advocacy for the poor and indigent.
 - b. Concern and advocacy for foreign, immigrant, and refuged peoples.
 - c. Concern and advocacy against personal and systemic racism, sexism, human trafficking and any system of dehumanization.
 - d. Concern and advocacy against worker exploitation and corporate greed.
 - e. Concern and advocacy for the right to life.
 - f. Concern and advocacy for diplomacy, reconciliation and restitution rather than violence and war as first means to resolve interpersonal and international conflict.
 - g. Concern and advocacy for wholesomeness in conduct and communication.
 - h. Concern and advocacy for healthy marriage and family life and those societal structures which contribute to the same.

- i. Concern and advocacy for personal and communal health which restores, prevents and heals addiction to destructive substances and behaviors.
- 7) Free Methodist leaders and congregations shall, in the cause of advocacy and activism, seek to do so in a manner that does not demean another and promotes civil discourse, even if detractors do not choose to behave in an equally civil manner.

Special considerations for when advocating for positions that may be construed as political or have impact in the legal, political or cultural arena:

- A. People will watch you, listen to you, and draw conclusions about you that may or may not be justified. Be willing to accept criticism, even when it is unjust or misdirected, or remain silent. Do not overreact or be dissuaded by criticism.
- B. Every social media post, email sent in name of the church or pastor, or literature distributed within the church or at church related function will reveal something about you and/or the church. Be intentional and aware of what you are revealing.
- C. Understand that when you when engage in, sponsor or support an event (activism and advocacy requires this as a rule) reveals what may be construed as a political ethos. For example, your concern for refugees may lead you to march with a group protesting bad treatment, and while you are not a member of the “Green Party” – the event may have been sponsored by such, and some will assume you are so aligned. Be willing to be maligned or misunderstood when your conscience dictates involvement in a public way in our imperfect world. But stay involved even if others will misunderstand.
- D. Worship attenders and community observers will more likely judge your church ethics and priorities around your known political affinities, advocacy and activism rather than your vision statement or written values. As you engage in the world, ask, what are you showing the world as being important to you?
- E. Carefully select the language you use to describe issues, candidates, and political organizations. “Unvarnished truth telling” is not biblical, “speaking the truth in love” (Eph.4.15) and having “conversation always full of grace seasoned with salt” (Col.4.6) is. Keep in mind that you are called to minister to your community, which is comprised of souls of every political persuasion.
- F. Respect and civility in all things honors Jesus Christ.
- G. There are times in which godly people must agree to disagree, but should never be disrespectful or demeaning in those disagreements. Do not, if it is up to you, allow a disagreement over which moral goal or political practice has priority to drive a wedge between your sisterhood and brotherhood as believers.
- H. Biblical prophets held kings and leaders to account for evil personal practices, moral and religious, and for enacting harmful policies (particularly those which harmed the poor or led to unnecessary bloodshed). There may be times when it is appropriate and important to point out significant failures of a candidate or leader. However, denigrating candidates, or the people who support them, generally reflects poorly upon a leader and the Church.
- I. The “arc of the moral universe is long, it bends towards justice” (Martin Luther King, Jr.), and prayer is a leading force in hastening that bend. “We battle not

against flesh and blood but ... against spiritual forces of evil" (Eph.6.12). In all matters of advocacy and activism, compassion and aid, bathe everything in prayer. Before pressing 'send' on a social media post, ask God in prayer for wisdom and correction.

In summary, do not be timid or afraid to do spiritual and practical battle with evil in all of its forms within our church, community, nation and world. Resist the devil, he will flee. But not without a fight. Yet, we know Christ has the victory. Avoid the entanglements that come with political party alignment, but do not avoid advocating for and blessing the people in pain in your backyard and around the world. This is part of our corporate calling as the body of Christ, and a distinctive which makes us Free Methodist.

John Adams, the second president of the United States stated " Power always thinks it has a great soul and vast views beyond the comprehension of the weak; and that it is doing God's service when it is violating all of God's laws."