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# Religious Liberty

# FAQs

## **Q:** What is religious liberty?

**A:** Religious liberty is the right to live, practice and worship according to one's religious beliefs. It is a liberty guaranteed by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

## **Q:** Is our religious freedom really being threatened?

**A:** Nearly two centuries ago, the founders of the Missouri Synod came to the United States seeking religious freedom. Like immigrants from many nations and many faiths, they found that freedom under the First Amendment of our U.S. Constitution. Today, however, that precious freedom is being eroded, and we must speak out now to preserve the right to live – not just worship – according to the teachings of our faith.

*Religious Liberty: Free to Be Faithful* was created as a response by LCMS leaders to increasing intrusions by government into the realm of the church. Recent examples of such intrusion include attacks on the

biblical definition of marriage; orders allowing for same-sex “marriage” ceremonies on military bases; and requirements that social service agencies with governmental contracts consider same-sex couples as potential foster care and adoptive parents, even if such practices violate church teachings under which the agencies operate.

The tipping point was the inclusion of a provision in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), also known as the health-care reform act, requiring the health plans of many religious employers to cover birth control drugs and procedures, including those that can cause the death of an unborn child. This provision is causing a conflict of conscience for many religious employers and individuals.

It is important to note that the LCMS takes no position on PPACA as a whole, for that is a matter for government, not churches, to decide. Our concern as Lutheran Christians and citizens of the United States, is to distinguish carefully between responsibilities God



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entrusts to the church (e.g., Matt. 28:19; Gal. 6:10) and those responsibilities He entrusts to governing authorities (e.g., Rom. 13:1–6; 1 Pet. 2:13–14). As a Christian church, our concern at this time is to retain the freedom to put our faith into action, backing up our verbal witness to the Gospel with deeds of love and compassion that are obedient to God’s Word. At the same time, as Christian citizens, we accept our responsibility to support with prayer, respect and taxes the work that government seeks to accomplish.

**Q: What can I do?**

**A:** We encourage our members to follow their consciences and sound reason in supporting candidates, legislation, and social and political efforts they believe would improve society and safeguard our precious religious liberty.

Here are some things you can do:

- Pray for our country, for our president and other officials, for those who serve in the armed forces and for all those who work to preserve freedom, peace and justice in this and every place (1 Tim. 2:1–2).
- Educate yourself about the many issues that our country is facing and the positions of parties and candidates.
- As you gain further knowledge on the issues, participate fully in the political process, and let your representatives know that these issues are important to you.
- Engage in informed, respectful discussions with friends and family, always being prepared to give an account for the sure and certain hope of eternal life through faith in Christ Jesus – a hope that no earthly event or power can undermine (1 Pet. 3:15).

**Q: Is this something the church should be speaking about? What about the doctrine of the two kingdoms?**

**A:** Lutherans affirm Scripture’s teaching that God rules and works in two different ways in different “realms” or “kingdoms.” God rules and works in His church through His Word and Sacraments, through which He creates and strengthens faith in Jesus Christ and love for one’s neighbor. God rules and works in the world He created and in secular human societies through earthly authorities and laws. Human laws benefit society when they reflect both the law that He inscribed onto the human heart and His gift of human reason.

As Christian citizens, we are called to fulfill the duties of citizenship. It is our responsibility as individual Christians to participate as fully as possible in the political system according to consciences formed by God’s Holy Spirit. While the church is not called by God to exercise political authority, it is incumbent for the church to proclaim and bear witness to “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27b ESV). The “whole counsel” includes God’s will in such areas as care for the poor, marriage and family, sexuality, and the preservation of human life at all stages of development. The discussion of such issues in the public realm offers Christians a unique opportunity for careful reflection on God’s will and design as they seek also to be responsible Christian citizens.

**Q: I would like to learn more about this. Where can I find more information?**

**A:** Visit [www.lcms.org/freetobefaitful](http://www.lcms.org/freetobefaitful) to get information and resources for church and home use. The LCMS’ “Religious Liberty: Free to Be Faithful” campaign serves to arm church leaders and lay members with Synod resources for taking informed action to protect the freedom of religion.