



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.

Canadian Lutheran Pastor Stands Against Tyranny

Rev. Dr. Harold Ristau is a pastor who has served as a Chaplain in the Canadian Armed Forces and authored *At Peace with War, My First Exorcism, and The Sacramental Character of Fasting*. He serves as Professor of Theology at Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catherines, Ontario. Rev. Dr. Ristau was in Ottawa with his family on February 12 to participate in the Peaceful Demonstration organized by the Truckers' Freedom Convoy. After his fellow veterans cleaned up the National War Memorial that is home to the tomb of Canada's unknown soldier, Rev. Ristau led a crowd of veterans and supporters in a devotion, Invocation of the Triune God, the Lord's Prayer, and Benediction. Those gathered for this time of reverence joined in singing *O Canada*.

For a generation in Canada, there has been a determined effort to force Christianity out of the sphere of public life. The bold yet humble confession of Rev. Dr. Ristau and his colleagues marks an iconic and decisive moment. After two years of increasingly draconian regulations and tightening totalitarian control, Canadians are experiencing a renewal of identity as the people express their desire for constitutional freedom.

It is shamefully deceptive that government-funded mass media in Canada (and the United States) is reporting the very opposite of what is actually happening in Canada's capitol of Ottawa. Rev. Ristau reports that Canadians of all ages and ethnicities are joining with the truckers in an unprecedented display of goodwill that includes feeding the homeless and cleaning up public spaces.

In spite of this, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced on February 14 that he was invoking the

Emergencies Act. The act can suspend basic rights such as freedom of movement and assembly. Those who violate the latest rules could be fined up to 5,000 Canadian dollars, face a maximum of five years in prison, or both. Of concern is that Trudeau's government now has the right to take control of protester's personal bank accounts. [Note: Earlier this month, GoFundMe took down a page accepting donations in support of the protesting truck drivers. Donor data was then leaked from crowdfunding site GiveSendGo.] (Sources: Interview by Rev. Jason Braaten of Gottesdienst; Rev. Dr. John Stephenson, a Gottesblog author; and Morning Wire, 2-17-22.)

What can we do? Please listen to Rev. Braaten's interview of Rev. Dr. Harold Ristau: <https://www.gottesdienst.org/.../tgc-167-staying-true-in...> (The Gottesdienst Crowd, TGC 167, "Staying True in the True North.") Rev. Ristau was also a guest of Todd Wilken on *Issues, Etc.* (0462 – Canada's Freedom Convoy, 2-15-22). Hear Rev. Ristau explain why Christians are compelled to obey God rather than man. Pray for Canadians who have gathered in Ottawa to peacefully demonstrate against tyranny and government overreach. Pray that Prime Minister Trudeau be motivated by truth to lift the Emergencies Act and meet with the freedom-seeking truckers. Talk with your children and grandchildren about what it means to obey God rather than man.

Please pray that Christians boldly yet humbly defy the evil of tyranny... in Jesus name.

Finnish Physician and Member of Parliament Stands Against Censorship

"There is legitimate censorship," writes Rev. Jonathan Lange, "and there is illegitimate censorship. Civil discourse requires that we know the difference. Flinging out the word 'censorship' to silence ideological opponents debases public discourse."

Proper censorship, explains Lange, includes calling out teachers, coaches, and elected officials "for using vile invective against students on the field, or colleagues on the floor. . . . Children, likewise, should be turned away from the box office of an R-rated, or X-rated movie." Improper censorship includes "viewpoint

discrimination on the editorial page, shadow banning in social media, exclusion of the Bible from the classroom and hate-speech laws Legitimate censorship builds a better society. Illegitimate censorship leads to barbarism.”

Lange writes, “Common to the most murderous regimes of the 19th and 20th centuries is the censorship of religious speech. Totalitarians require such censorship because religions tend to teach loyalties that are above the nation (‘one nation under God’). Religions also appeal to unchangeable ethics rooted in principles beyond the current regime. As prelude to WWII, Europe’s state churches were, one-by-one, censored by the regime. This did not happen without dissent. Nazis first silenced the state church’s opposition to anti-semitism by lavishing favors on clergy. Those who continued to speak the truth were de-platformed, imprisoned and murdered. Only after the historic doctrine of the state church was replaced by so-called ‘German Christianity’ did the real evil begin. The Nazi project, for instance, did not use Lutheranism to murder millions. It silenced Lutheranism in order to weaponize its hollow-out institution. That’s why it should concern the entire world when long-accepted Christian doctrines suddenly become the object of censorship.”

This is happening in America and, for example, in Finland. On January 24, a “diminutive woman named Paivi Rasanen stood before a tribunal in Helsinki to face formal charges. Dr. Rasanen is a family physician who was elected as a Member of Parliament. Later, she rose to be the interior minister of Finland (2011-2015). Her education, public-mindedness, and popularity with the Finnish people cannot be questioned. Now, if convicted, she faces two years in prison and up to (\$11,300) in fines. . . . Several charges were leveled by the Finnish prosecutor general, [but] the most alarming, from a censorship point of view, is the charge that she criticized the leadership of Finland’s state church by tweeting a photograph of the state church’s own Bible opened to Romans 1:24-27.

“The state does not take issue with words that she wrote, but with the words of the Bible itself. This demonstrates, from the outset, that it is not a charge that hinges on ‘interpretation.’ Rather, the state church of Finland admits that the uninterpreted words of the Bible are themselves offensive to the state.

“Rasanen herself understands that this blatant censorship is an attempt to outlaw any principle or any god who stands over the Finnish government. Would that there were more people like her who stood for the Christian doctrine that the Nazis wanted to silence! We

cannot stand in judgment of societies that were overcome by lies and murder if we are unwilling to stand in support of those willing to stand for life and truth today.” The prosecutor general of Finland “is seeking to censor the quiet and kind voice of Dr. Rasanen. She teaches us all how a good citizen should respond: ‘Now it is time to speak. Because the more we are silent, the narrower the space for freedom of speech and religion grows. If I’m convicted, I think that the worst consequences would not be the fine against me, or even the prison sentence, it would be the censorship.’” (Excerpted from Rev. Jonathan Lange’s blog about Paivi Rasanen, Only Human, 1-28-22.)

What can we do? We can pray for this family physician and civil servant who is married to a Lutheran pastor, and for the Lutheran Bishop Rev. Dr. Juhana Pohjola who participated in the printing of Dr. Rasanen’s booklet on the biblical teaching of male and female. We can pray in the way of Martin Luther that God convert the Finnish prosecutors and court officials or, if they declare Dr. Rasanen and Rev. Pohjola guilty, that God oppose them and prevent them from doing further harm. We can follow Dr. Rasanen’s brave example by “opposing illegitimate censorship wherever it may raise its totalitarian head.”

Please pray for courage in speaking, printing, and living the Word of God... in Jesus’ name.

The Church Stands Against All that Demands Disobedience to God

Heroes in Scripture have defied government authority. Exodus 1:15-21 tells of the courageous Hebrew midwives who defied Pharaoh’s command to murder all the newly born Hebrew boys. Esther 4:10-16, 5:1-2 tells of Queen Esther and her courage to risk the penalty of capital punishment by approaching the king uninvited and pleading for the Jewish people. Daniel 3:1-23 tells of the three Hebrew men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego who defied Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, by refusing to bow down to his image of gold. Daniel defied King Darius by continuing to pray to God even though it was illegal. Matthew 12:1-14 and John 18:31 tell of how Jesus defied the lawful Jewish authorities of His day by refusing to obey the Jewish Sabbath laws the rabbis had written to shackle the people. Acts 5:27-29, 12:1-4, and 16:19 tell how the Apostles and early Christians defied the Jewish and Roman authorities by refusing to stop preaching the Gospel.

Please pray to resist what is evil, do what is good, and obey God rather than man... in Jesus’ name. AMEN.

