



RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Seventh-day Adventist Church
SOUTHERN UNION CONFERENCE

The Local Church Religious Liberty Leader

JOB DESCRIPTION



Bible Principles

“...Therefore
choose life that
both thou and thy
seed may live.”

(Deuteronomy 30:15-19)



The local religious liberty leader
has the opportunity to serve the church
in the following ways:

God asks His church, to be not only a community of people sharing a common purpose and fellowship but also a light within the community it serves.

To worship God according to conscience and to share Christ's love are cherished freedoms not universally enjoyed.

The government of God is based on freedom of choice. This freedom predates Eden, going all the way back to the courts of heaven, where Lucifer and his sympathizers were given the freedom to choose whom they would serve.

God chose to create humanity with the power of choice. “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. . . . Therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deuteronomy 30:15-19).

Free exercise of religion is like a fragile flower; it must receive the most vigorous protection possible and the most gentle care to be found. Within these parameters freedom of conscience thrives.

True freedom is found only in God's law, a reflection of His character. James calls God's law “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25). Peter warned of those who have become slaves to wanton lust: “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:19).

“it is our duty to do all in our power to avert the threatened danger.”

(Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 452)

Satan is freedom's greatest foe and under his regime liberty of conscience is trampled underfoot. Prophecy has foretold that Satan's plans would succeed amid the resurgence of church-state union.

A political power (beast of Revelation 13) will arise in the last days causing people to “worship” another religious political power. Religion and politics are symbolized in Revelation 17 by an apostate church (a decadent woman) being sustained by the government (the beast). The persecuting power of this union of church and state is illustrated by the woman who becomes drunk with the blood of the saints.

What then are we to do about these threats to religious freedom? The Spirit of Prophecy for our day admonishes, “it is our duty to do all in our power to avert the threatened danger. We should endeavor to disarm prejudice by placing ourselves in a proper light before the people. We should bring before them the real question at issue, thus interposing the most effectual protest against measures to restrict liberty of conscience” (Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 452).

For these reasons, every church should elect a religious liberty leader to keep up with last day events in order to keep the church informed of vital religious liberty issues.

Please Note

Some functions of this church office must be carried out at specific times during the year. Others will be done only upon the initiative of the person selected.

During the annual [Religious Liberty Campaign](#) in January and February, you should plan to spend at least two hours in preparations and contacts.



OVERVIEW

The local church Religious Liberty Leader has the opportunity to serve the church and community by alerting them to the developments that may affect religious freedom. The person elected to this office should be dedicated to, and be interested in, matters of religious freedom. He/she should also be or become familiar with the fundamental principles of religious liberty, and the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on major issues of church-state concern. The local church Religious Liberty Leader may thus not only serve the members of the local church, but may also become actively involved in religious liberty matters in the local community.

The religious liberty leader should work closely with the pastor and/or church board to formulate plans for communicating important information to the congregation and to the community, reporting the most significant issues and events to the local or union conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Director.



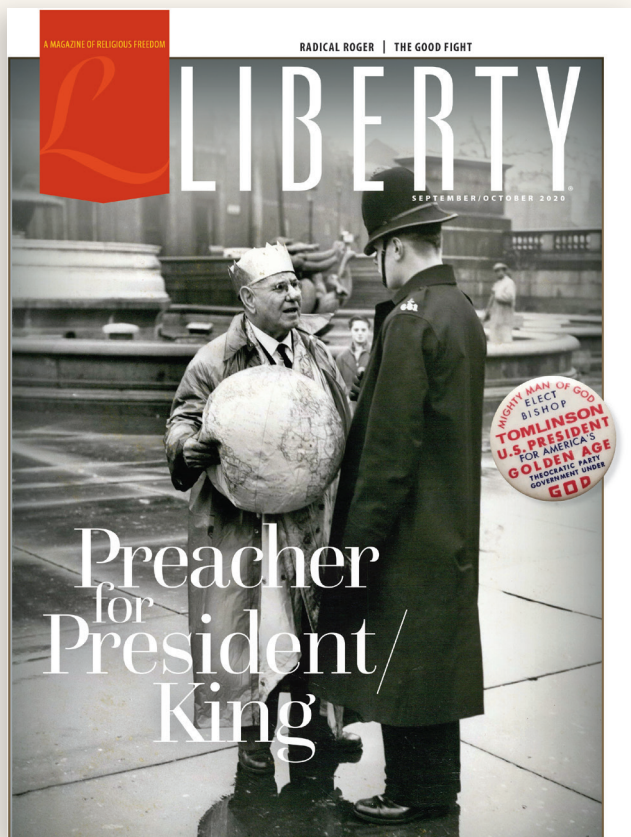
Suggestions

FOR THE
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY LEADER

01. The Religious Liberty Leader Should Subscribe to [Liberty Magazine](#).

02. Keep [Liberty Magazine](#) before Your Church Members throughout the Year

Your first responsibility as Religious Liberty Leader is to help your pastor conduct the [Religious Liberty Campaign](#) in your church and keep [Liberty magazine](#) and religious liberty issues before the church members throughout the year. Detailed instructions are provided by the North American Division office each January in the Liberty campaign packets. Read them carefully and you will find it easy to carry out this responsibility. Set an example by your wholehearted support of Liberty. Then encourage church members to subscribe to Liberty for themselves and give generously to send [Liberty magazine](#) to community, state, and national officials and thought leaders. For assistance call your union public affairs and religious liberty director, they are responsible for the Liberty program throughout the Southern Union. The Southern Union can also provide you with lists of top elected leaders in your community.



03. Watch for News Items of Concern to Religious Liberty

As news items on religious liberty issues appear in your newspaper, on the internet and social media sites, in news magazines, on the radio, and on television, be alert of all details. Be accurate in your fact-finding. BEWARE of rumors spread from independent sources. If an item sounds too fantastic to be true, chances are it is. Verify information with your union or local conference PARL director. Report authentic news concerning religious liberty issues to your church members regularly. Include good news as well as bad news through church newsletters, the church bulletin, and during church announcement time.

04. Become Involved in the Local Community

Become acquainted with your city/county public servants. Attend local meetings to become better acquainted with the problems in your area. The following checklist will help you in your community contacts throughout the year:

1. Attend city and county governmental meetings periodically to become better acquainted with elected officials and the issues they deal with, even when no religious liberty issues are present.
2. Inform your pastor and Union PARL director about major developments in your community that could affect religious freedom.
3. Organize local grassroots contacts when appropriate. Always consult with your union or conference religious liberty director before proceeding on major issues.
4. Report to your church all items from city or county council meetings of religious liberty significance.
5. Be sure all of your city or county council members receive [Liberty Magazine](#).
6. Keep a current name and address file of city and county officials including council members.

05. Write Letters to the Editor

When local or national issues arise, write carefully worded letters to the editor of your local newspaper. It is always well to check the contents of letters on sensitive issues with your pastor before submitting any letter. Be careful to speak only for yourself and not the entire church.

06. Serve as a Resource Coordinator

Develop a file of religious liberty resource materials for your church. Material is available from the Union PARL department on a variety of topics. Keep a file of articles on pertinent topics. Develop a bibliography of books available at your church or city library and share these reading recommendations with the members.

07. Watch for Religious Liberty Problems among Church Members.

Some church members are not aware that assistance is available to them as they face Sabbath employment problems or pressure to join labor unions. The first step is to place these members in touch with your pastor or the local conference or union office PARL department. Pastors have guidelines for handling the initial steps. Most problem solving, whether for private sector or government, is done by the Union PARL department. You may contact them at (770) 408-1800 or email them at ReligiousLiberty@southernunion.com

08. Give Recognition to the Significant Contributions of Civic Leaders

When a civic official in your community takes a strong stand on upholding religious liberty, contact your union PARL director for assistance in recognizing the official by presenting an appropriate plaque or award at church or in the official's office. Arrange for publicity in the local newspaper, your conference newsletter/magazine and in the union paper, *Southern Tidings*. If you invite a public official to speak at your church, take precautions so that it does not become a political appearance. Avoid these type of engagements during campaign seasons

09. Know State and National Leaders from Your Area

Become acquainted with state and national legislators who serve your area. Contact them when religious liberty issues arise. Be careful to maintain a bi-partisan attitude in order to work both sides on a particular issue.

TOOLS & RESOURCE MATERIALS

Liberty magazine is the primary tool used by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States to speak to the issues of religious freedom and church-state separation. This journal is sent six times a year to governmental officials at all levels. Subscriptions are funded by the Religious Liberty Offering taken in January in all North American Division churches.

Resource Materials:

The following materials are available from your union conference.

Pamphlet: Contacting Your Legislator –

Contains ideas for communicating with government officials.

Employment and Sabbath Keeping Q & A Brochure –

This brochure is recommended for new church members or to be posted on your church bulletin board. It briefly answers some of the most commonly asked questions regarding Sabbath work issues and points the reader to additional help.

Public Affairs & Religious Liberty Objectives –

This information is a fast overview of the work in the religious liberty department. It lists resources and is constantly updated with local contact information for your conference leadership.

Church Members Sabbath Accommodation Kit:

This kit contains sample letters for members with Sabbath work problems.

Church Members' Checklist for Sabbath Problems –

This is a quick start guide of the best practices for obtaining a Sabbath accommodation. Information covers the steps to take both before, during, and after a member is hired for a job. The information is listed to give a general overview of what they may need to do or expect when Sabbath accommodation comes to issue in the workplace.

Guidelines on Religious Discrimination:

Reprinted from the Federal Register these guidelines were published by the EEOC to help workers and employers find accommodations for religious observance and practices on the job.

“The religious liberty leader is one of the important spiritual leaders in the local church.”

10. Contact Your Legislators

When significant religious liberty issues arise, your church members may be asked to write to members of the state or federal legislature. A special pamphlet entitled “Contacting Your Legislator” is available from your union conference PARL office. The following points will help you to be ready to go into action when called upon to contact legislators:

1. Use the internet to find the email address of your representatives in the state legislature and the U.S. Congress.
2. Take great care to be *concise, courteous, and cogent*. No letter should exceed one page in length.
3. Unless asked to speak for the Adventist Church, or unless it is pertinent to the issue, it is unnecessary to mention your church affiliation in your letter. Your letter should be from you and reflect your personal views. If you think it is an important issue and the church should be involved or take an official stand, please contact the Southern Union PARL Department.
4. Request a response from the legislator.
5. Do not use form letters. They are easily spotted. Do not copy sample letters verbatim. Use your own words to express your thoughts. Emails are perfectly acceptable (and preferred) ways to communicate with officials.
6. Refer to a piece of legislation by title or bill number. Call well-known bills by the name used in the media to describe them.

11. Organize Religious Liberty Rallies for Your Church or District

Encourage your pastor to schedule an area-wide religious liberty rally in your church or district. Sabbath afternoons are best. Follow-up promotion via social media, telephone, email or church newsletter as a way to obtain good attendance. Your conference or union can supply qualified speakers if notified well in advance.

12. [Waymarks Newsletter](#) is a Resource Reporter

The Southern Union religious liberty newsletter, *Waymarks*, contains news from around the country dealing with church-state issues. If you see something in your area that may be of interest, feel free to share the story with the Southern Union for inclusion in the newsletter. You can also use the newsletter to keep your members informed of religious liberty events. Subscriptions are free. Members may subscribe individually by sending an email to: ReligiousLiberty@southernunion.com

13. Become a Reporter for [Liberty Magazine](#)

Keep a watch for items you think may be of interest to Liberty and send them to the editor.

14. Spiritual Gifts

The religious liberty leader is one of the important spiritual leaders in the local church. The spiritual gift of teaching (Romans 12:7) will be especially important to fulfilling this office.

The gift of tact (1 Corinthians 12:8; Proverbs 25:11) is essential, especially when dealing with public officials, news media persons, and the public in general. The wisdom to say the right thing at the right time is a spiritual gift that is much in demand for religious liberty leaders. This goes along with the gift of discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10). Discerning between true and false issues, spotting faulty reasoning, and holding one's tongue when tempted to strike out in retaliation are necessary attributes of those who are the watchers on the walls guarding religious freedom.

15. Be Alert to the Following Religious Liberty Issues

Report to the local church the items with religious liberty significance. Some of the items should be reported to the local conference or union PARL director as well.

- Report state and local problems to your union PARL director.
- City/state ordinances licensing or restricting religious literature.
- City/state ordinances prohibiting religious solicitation or distribution of evangelistic material.
- Labor Union problems-- employment and attempts to organize Seventh-day Adventist institutions.
- Sunday law issues on all levels.
- Sabbath employment problems.
- Sabbath civil service problems.
- Sabbath examination problems.
- Sabbath problems with medical and dental boards.
- Public elections held on Sabbath.
- Laws that would place the government in the role of regulating or controlling religious activity or individual religious behavior.
- 10 Commandment Issues
- Bible teaching in public schools
- Mandatory Saturday school attendance
- Gambling laws.
- Zoning laws affecting churches and schools.
- Ordinances that could affect evangelism.
- Property regulations for churches or schools.
- Tax exemptions for churches and church schools.

16. Maintain a Religious Liberty Bulletin Board

Seek permission from your pastor and/or church board to place a "Religious Liberty Bulletin Board" in an area in the church where members will find it easily. Post current news clippings, issue-oriented cartoons, and pertinent, timely quotations. Remember do not make your bulletin board political. Keep the bulletin board up to date.



COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

PARL invites your comments and questions regarding religious liberty issues.

If you have questions or comments call: (770) 408-1800 Monday-Thursday

Email: ReligiousLiberty@southernunion.com

Website: southernunion.com/religiousliberty

Seminars offered by PARL (most run about 90 minutes):

- Current Events
- Sabbath Accommodation in the Workplace
- Church History on Religious Liberty
- Religious Liberty in the Courts Today
- . . . and much more

PARL (Public Affairs and Religious Liberty)