

Christian Action Ministry Newsletter

Involving the Christian in Community Action

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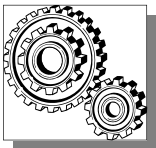
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How a study on fasting and praying led one Christian man to become involved in legislative testimony

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If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please call 655-0280, email, or contact our website



In the Works

Upcoming legislative bills

Physician Assisted Suicide


Are you interested in becoming involved? CAM is looking for interested and active people to act as liaisons to their church, helping to keep the Christian community informed. Contact CAM at 372-6442.

Protect Our Children Pray, Speak Up, Be Real & Vote

By
Mark Flemming

Representative government, at its best, is not a curative but a preservative because it reflects the will of the people. The justice it metes out, in turn, reinforces the common will. That government should encourage good behavior by punishing evil. (Romans 13:3) "For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;" We, as American Christians, have the opportunity to express our (and hopefully His) will in our government through several important means:

1. Praying: (1 Timothy 2:1-2) "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity."

 We are commanded to pray on behalf of our leaders regardless of their political persuasions.

2. Speaking Up: (Ephesians 4:25) "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one *of you* with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."



Let your representative



(and your neighbors) know where you stand on specific issues. This has become more important with the current make-up of the legislature. Do not assume that your representatives know what you know or will automatically agree or disagree with you. Freedom of speech is still supposed to be a protected act, in part, because it is exercised. We must also be sure to listen with as much care

as we speak with.

3. Being Living Examples For Good: (Matthew 5:16) "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."



The word integrity comes from a Latin word that means wholeness, i.e. "it all fits together." If we have God's light inside us it should show on the outside too. This way others can see what a positive difference Jesus makes in our lives; it can lend validity to our words, and help steer others to positive ends.

4. Voting: It is hard to comprehend the great number of lives and livelihoods that have been sacrificed over more than two hundred years for us to have the responsibility and opportunity to elect our representatives. Each time we vote we add honor to the memories of those who sacrificed for us and we build confidence for future generations to be willing to do the same and enjoy its benefits.

"The child is not the mere creature of the state"
Michigan Federal Court 1965

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We need to intelligently and prayerfully participate in each our the federal, state, and local election opportunities. A number of Vermont local elections will be occurring on or about March 2, 2005. Our local representatives may one day represent us at a higher level so we need to know who they are, what they stand for, pick the best ones, and even consider running ourselves. Some may say, "my vote doesn't count in Vermont." Your vote certainly will not count if you do not use it. If you think your vote, example, speech, and prayer are not worth the effort, then please think about the children of this state in the following real situation.



You probably think (as I did) that the possession or sale of child pornography (depicting children) is simply illegal in this state. The 2000 Vermont state law on the state's Web site says otherwise. [<http://198.187.128.12/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=fs-main.htm&2.0>]

Document 1 of 1
Source: Vermont Statutes/TITLE 13 Crimes and Criminal Procedure/PART 1 Crimes/

CHAPTER 64. SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN/ § 2827. Possession of child pornography says (a) No person shall, with knowledge of the character and content, possess any photograph, film or visual depiction, including any depiction which is stored electronically, . . . [graphic language was omitted here but is visible on the State's Web site].

This sounds fine except that there are some alarming exceptions to this law:

(b) This section does not apply:

(2) if the person was a bona fide **school, museum or public library**, or was a person acting in the course of employment as an **employee or official** of such an organization or of a **retail outlet** affiliated with and serving the educational or intended purpose of that school, museum or library;

The law says that it is acceptable for **schools, museums, public libraries, and retail shops serving the other three** to have child pornography. These "child-rich" environments might attract pedophiles.

Do we want this? Here is a history of efforts to close these loopholes. [Thanks go to Bill Day and Jill Ciampi for their input.]

- Jan. 2001 - Senators Illuzi, Doyle, Canns, and Scott introduced a Senate bill to remove the exemption for schools, museums, and libraries. The Senate Judiciary Committee Chair **never allowed** the Senate bill to be taken up during the 2001 or 2002 sessions.
- Mar. 2001 - Barre Town Rep. Koch introduced an amendment to the Senate bill to remove the exemptions for schools, museums, libraries, social workers and others "having a bonafide interest in the subject matter." **Strong objections** on the House floor and in the Judiciary Committee caused him to withdraw the amendment until 2001.
- Jan. 2002 - Rep. Koch introduced a House bill with revisions to address earlier objections to the Senate bill. The House Judiciary Committee **never acted** on the measure and the House bill **expired** at the end of the 2002 session.
- Jan. 2003 - Rep. Koch reintroduced a House bill to remove the exemptions. The House bill **sat in the House Judiciary Committee for almost a year.**
- Jan. 2004 - The House Judiciary Committee allowed two hours of expert

testimony from Vermont State Police, retired Public Safety Commissioner James Walton, and others with strong arguments for the House bill but it was **allowed to die** at the end of the 2004 session.

- Apr./May 2004 - The House Judiciary Committee amended a Senate bill (for publishing sex-offenders names to the public and known as "Megan's Law") with the intention of replacing House bill from Jan. 2003 but with the **opposite intent** of the House bill. It would **expand the exemptions** and allow *private* libraries as well as public libraries to possess child pornography. When the House returned the bill back to the Senate, the Senate refused the changes and **words relating to child pornography were removed** from the Senate bill.
- Aug. 2004 - Rep. Koch, the Chair of the House Health and Welfare Committee, sent a new anti-child pornography bill to the Vermont Legislative Council for the beginning of the 2005 legislative session.

Where do your representatives stand? Where do you want them to stand?

Mark Flemming is a Board Member of the Christian Action Ministry and attends Essex Alliance Church.



"I am much afraid that schools will prove to be the great gate of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth."

Martin Luther

An Inspirational Story

By
Lausten Stevens

At the time the Vermont legislature was about to undertake a response to the court ruling on marriage, I was leading a discussion group using Dr. Bill Bright's book, The Coming Revival: America's Call to Fast, Pray, and Seek God's Face. Since I had already led one group through the book, I had asked my friend, Joe, another member of our church, to lead this second group with me. We were fasting Sunday morning before the class. After one meeting, Joe remarked, "Boy, I really had a hard time fasting this morning."

"So did I," was my response. Now, one meal for a healthy adult is not that big a deal if fasting is just a physical activity, but by the end of the morning worship service, I was persuaded that I needed to continue to fast until the public hearing in Montpelier, Tuesday of the following week.

I had been to a few of these marathon hearings before. You drive for hours and sit for hours for the privilege of speaking for two minutes, often to legislators who have already made up their minds. It isn't for everyone, but chapter 33 of the book of Ezekiel had been freshly quickened to me, especially the phrase, "I have appointed you a watchman." I had over a week to fast and pray and prepare for my two minutes. I informed my boss that I would be leaving work early that day to go to the hearing. Not everyone has that flexibility. On the day, he actually encouraged me to get going. I let it be known in church that I was going and our asso-

ciate pastor and one other man, Ray, arranged to go with me.

The morning of the hearing, I took our car for inspection and the man announced, "You need tires." There had been plans for 1,500 people on the State House lawn in support of traditional marriage. A freak snowstorm blew in, catching all the weather fore-casters by surprise. The bus company canceled the trip and there was no rally on the lawn, but I had brand new all-season radials. We rode with comfort and peace of mind.

Pastor had never been to a legislative hearing before, so I wanted to be sure that he got the most out of it. That meant arriving in mid-afternoon for a hearing that began at 7:00 PM to be sure we got seats in the main chamber and were signed up to speak fairly early. Normally there is a bill under consideration and you sign up to speak either for or against the bill. This time, there was no bill so the committee announced that names would be drawn to see who got to speak that night. Ray held our seats while Pastor and I went out into the hall to submit our names. While we were waiting in line, I remarked, "Well, God has called me here. My name is going to be drawn." Pastor did not respond in kind. Why not? He is a licensed, ordained minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I am a layman. He is a native Vermonter; I am not. It is a fair and measured declaration: society embracing sodomy as acceptable is a hallmark of the decline and fall of nations, and empires, and civilizations throughout world history. This was happening in his home

state, on his watch. He had many good, but generic reasons for being there. Hundreds of others could have been there for the same generic reasons. Not all names would be drawn. Every name had a statistically equal chance of being drawn.

The New American Standard Bible renders Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the assurance of [things] hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." We rest in assurance; we act on conviction. The thing hoped for in this case was that we would have the opportunity to speak and that we would speak effectively. If you exercise your citizenship, in due time, you will get your moment. You can be confident of this, but confidence in your part in the process is not assurance that your name will be drawn on this particular occasion. Faith does not exist in a vacuum. Faith is in something. In this case, in a careful and limited way, I have to say the word of the LORD, "I have appointed you," was quickened to me. My assurance came from the word of the LORD.

Faith without works is dead. I had prepared myself. I had taken the necessary steps to be in the right place at the right time. I had the reassurance that the timing of brand new tires was providential in light of the effect of the storm on the plans of others. But all of this starts with the word of the LORD.

I had acted on conviction and I had spoken on conviction by declaring, "My name is going to be drawn." Now it was time for me to rest in assurance. That meant not watching the clock while I waited for my name to be

called. God's timing is always best.

Meanwhile, "back at the ranch," my family could not listen to the proceedings because the radio station that broadcast it was not coming in. However, my daughter's friend asked if my daughter could stay the night with her. My two minutes came during the fifteen minutes it took my wife to drive our daughter over to her friend's house. The station came in fine on the car radio, again confirming the providence of God.

I cannot say how many other "watchmen" had been called there that night. I have been active in the political party of my choice for a number of years and several of the legislators in my county know me. I cannot say how much my remarks contributed to how they voted. I can say that Pastor went back the next week and got his turn at the mike. I can say that the LORD graciously arranged for my wife and daughter to hear me publicly address the issue. I can say, dear reader, that you are just as much a citizen as I am. I can say that God is no respecter of persons. I can say that we are stewards of the rights and privileges we have as citizens in this country. I can say that just voting once every two or four years is not going to be sufficient stewardship for the day in which we live.

What do you say?
How does the word of the LORD speak to you?

Lausten Stevens is a member of the Christian Action Ministry and attends Roadside Assembly of God in Rutland

What can I do?



Faith without works is dead
James 2:17

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www.christianactionministry.com

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As you read this newsletter, the 2005 Vermont legislature is in session, and President George W. Bush is beginning his second term. The country is fighting a war on terror. Social security and healthcare are important issues, and new appointments to the Supreme Court will likely be made.

It is important that you become aware of the issues our legislators will be discussing and acting upon, and with that awareness, take an active role in contacting your representatives to ensure your views are represented.

Our obligations as Christians didn't end at the polling booth in November. We have to stay involved in the process. This issue addresses one item that affects our children and offers an inspirational story about getting involved.

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Next Meetings
February 14, 7:00 pm
Community Bible Church
South Burlington, Vt.
March 14, 7:00 pm
North Avenue Alliance
Burlington, Vt.

**Making A Difference
in
Vermont!**



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