

February 10, 2025

Dear ND Legislators,

As a practicing and faithful Christian, I am opposed to **HCR 3020**. Our country was founded on freedom of religion. Please review United States history to remind yourself not to repeat the mistakes of other countries and rulers. The Puritans left England for freedom of religion, not because they were persecuted by non-Christian religious groups, but because they were persecuted by the Church of England AND the king who was the head of that church.

As one of my wise pastors from my childhood often reminded our congregation, "Separation of church and state was not created to protect government from the church, but to protect the church from the government." Christians do not need to be protected from other religions in this country. We need to be protected from governmental bodies trying to act as the voice of Christianity. It is only my Lord, Jesus Christ, who is my spiritual ruler. It is not the State of North Dakota, the President or the United States of America. This is not my forever home. My faith and hope is in the everlasting life to come when Christ returns again.

As quoted from the attached web site to the Library of Congress:

www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel01.html

"The religious persecution that drove settlers from Europe to the British North American colonies sprang from the conviction, held by Protestants and Catholics alike, that uniformity of religion must exist in any given society. This conviction rested on the belief that there was one true religion and that it was the duty of the civil authorities to impose it, forcibly if necessary, in the interest of saving the souls of all citizens. Nonconformists could expect no mercy and might be executed as heretics."

I grew up in and still practice doctrinal beliefs that are from a minority Christian denomination. My Sabbath is on the seventh day, as Christ's and the disciple's was. I do not participate in most religious holidays because they are not Bible based and stemmed from historical governmental bodies and the Catholic Church trying to combine pagan holy days and practices with Christianity to maintain control of their people and attract non-believers. (Again, please read your history.)

Will the ND Legislature next be telling me what day of the week I should worship or what holidays I have to observe? Will you tell me what church I have to attend to be a "real" Christian? These are my fears and anxieties. I need freedom of religion as a Christian just as much as individuals who practice religions other than Christianity. If you want to defend Christianity, defend our right to practice religion as we believe to be true.

You may think you are ethical and doing this for the “right” reasons, but what about our lawmakers who come after you? What about the well being of the next generations if these laws are used by individuals, without ethical or moral integrity, who use them for power, control and greed?

My God is powerful enough to defend Himself without our human interference. (1 Chronicles 29:11, Exodus 14:13-14, Isaiah 41:10, Jeremiah 32:17) He has already provided his laws. Christ did not come to overthrow governments, but to show us God in the flesh. He instructed each of us to be disciples and to tell others of God’s grace, mercy, love and forgiveness. He did not instruct us to forcefully impose a belief system on others. God gives all of us a choice. He wants us to love and serve Him by choice, not by force. My choice is to be God’s hands, feet, and mouth. It is NOT up to our government to spread the Gospel. Leave that to our churches and Christian brothers and sisters.

As a legislator, if you want to protect and spread Christianity, do so by serving, doing good works and showing Christ’s love to those you encounter. Do this by defending the US Constitution and our liberties. Allow the United States of America to be a beacon of freedom and hope to all. The “Gentile” rulers were the ones who created laws to control others, remove freedoms and persecute Christians. Please remember that as you vote on any resolution.

Matthew 20:25-28 *“Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

May God bless your leadership and provide you with His wisdom.

Respectfully,

Lisa Poppenhagen