



October 1, 2010

Cornerstone Church Subject to Possible IRS Investigation

The watchdog group Americans United for Separation of Church and State that works to preserve the separation between church and state has issued a formal complaint against the Cornerstone World Outreach Church in Sioux City for violating a federal law that prohibits tax-exempt religious groups from openly endorsing or opposing candidates who run for public office. However, the leadership of the church is not intimidated and one of its pastors, Rev. Cary Gordon even declared, "Let the battle between church and state begin".

The non-partisan Americans United for Separation of Church and State's complaint stemmed from a letter sent by the church on Sept 3 to other churches in the area to participate in Project Jeremiah 2010 which is an effort to oust 3 Supreme Court judges in Iowa who are up for retention votes in November. Iowa judges are nominated by a non-partisan group and thereafter appointed by the governor but must stand for periodic retention voting in order to remain in office. Last year, the Iowa High Court made a unanimous ruling of 7 for and none against that the state's ban on same sex marriages was unconstitutional. The three Supreme Court judges in question are Chief Justice Marsha Ternus, Judges Micheael Streit and David Baker.

The Americans United for Separation of Church and State's executive director Barry Lynn stated that the letter sent by Cornerstone was an obvious violation of the federal tax code. In its letter the church urged other churches to encourage their congregation members to vote against the three judges and offered free legal defense in court should

anyone need it, courtesy of Liberty Institute, a non-profit organization based in Texas that represents more than 30 family policy councils across the nation.

Project Jeremiah 2010 is an initiative by the pastoral leadership of Cornerstone in collaboration with Pastor Gordon's PeaceMaker's Institute, Liberty Institute and Family Policy Center. The letter issued by Cornerstone allegedly called upon pastors to 'commit to confront the injustice and arrogance of the Iowa Supreme Court by boldly calling upon their flock to vote 'No to Judicial Retention' for the three consecutive Sundays prior to Election Day'.

The IRS has not officially commented on this matter.

Another Iowa pastor, Pastor Dan Lozer of Mayflower Church in Sioux City said that pastors can express their own political inclination but are not allowed to say how the church wants the congregation to vote.