

The Church's Opportunity in a Time of Decision

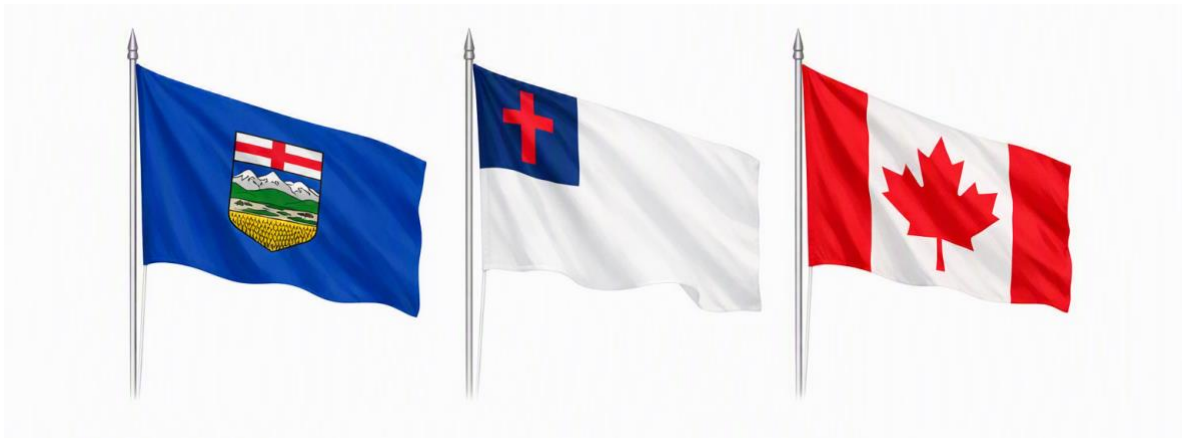
A Pastoral Guide for Leading Non-Partisan Conversations about
Alberta Independence

Date: August 2026

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Introduction: The Church's Opportunity in a Time of Decision

Alberta's conversation about independence and public life is not only a political question. For pastors and church leaders, it is a *discipleship opportunity*. These conversations are already shaping people in our churches: their fears, loyalties, hopes, convictions, and understanding of Christian public witness.

This guide is designed to help pastors, elders, ministry leaders, and congregations lead these conversations with biblical clarity, pastoral courage, humility, and love of neighbour. It does not tell Christians what political conclusion they must reach. Its purpose is to help the Church form disciples who can think, speak, pray, vote, and act faithfully under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

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The Church's calling is neither silence nor partisanship. Silence leaves other voices to disciple God's people. Partisanship risks making political identity more central than allegiance to Christ. A more faithful path begins with Scripture, prayer, discernment, charity, courage, and confidence in the Kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Pastors who want to begin practically should move first to **How to Use This Guide**, then to the main conversation framework and the small group guide. The longer theological and public-policy materials have been placed later as supporting resources for deeper study.

At a Glance: What This Guide Provides

This non-partisan pastoral resource helps pastors, elders, ministry leaders, and congregations engage Alberta's independence conversation, along with other contested public questions, under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

It provides a clear pathway for leaders: name the pastoral problem, use biblical categories, guide faithful conversation, protect unity without avoiding truth, and offer practical tools for small groups, boards, retreats, congregational forums, or teaching settings.

For busy pastors and leaders, this Guide is a tool that allows you to find everything you need in one place. This resource will assist you to frame the conversation while protecting the unity and witness of the church, how to lead without prescribing a political conclusion, and how to help people distinguish biblical conviction from partisan identity. The **Guide for Small Group Conversations** is central to this goal.

The appendices provide deeper support materials, including public concerns frequently raised by Canadian Christians, reflections on the Church's public voice, biblical and theological exegesis, and websites for further discernment.



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The Problem This Guide Helps Pastors Address

Pastors and church leaders in Alberta are facing a public conversation many congregants are already having, but few churches have been equipped to address biblically. The issue is not only whether Alberta should remain in Canada or pursue independence. The deeper pastoral question is:

What is the role and responsibility of the Church and its leadership in the Alberta independence conversation?

Many pastors feel this tension. Silence can appear safe; engagement can feel risky. Public issues may divide a congregation, distract from the Gospel, reopen wounds, or draw the Church into partisanship. These concerns are not signs of indifference but often reflect sincere pastoral responsibility.

A helpful framework comes from five pastoral concerns that help explain why faithful leaders hesitate and why they need wise, biblical, and practical support.*

1. **The belief that silence is neutral.** Silence still shapes a congregation and leaves other voices to disciple people.
2. **The concern that political engagement creates division.** Unity matters, but avoidance can leave churches unprepared for hard public questions.
3. **The concern that public issues distract from the Gospel.** The Gospel remains central while also shaping how Christians live in public life.
4. **The concern that difficult topics may reopen deep wounds.** Painful issues require pastoral care, not silence, so truth and grace can bring hope.
5. **The need for a practical strategy.** Pastors need clear tools for when to speak, what to say, and how to lead wisely.

These concerns clarify the problem this guide seeks to address. Pastors do not need criticism for hesitating; they need companionship, clarity, biblical categories, and usable tools for leading God's people through contested public questions without surrendering Gospel centrality or public responsibility.

Silence is rarely neutral. When public questions affect freedom, family, conscience, education, stewardship, justice, truth, public order, and the common good, the Church has a responsibility to help God's people think Christianly. Pastors are not called to tell congregants how to vote; they are called to form disciples who are informed, prayerful, morally serious, charitable, courageous, and faithful to Christ.

This guide comes alongside pastors with a biblical, non-partisan, and practical framework for helping congregations engage Alberta's independence conversation with wisdom. The goal is pastoral formation, not political mobilization: helping churches distinguish biblical principle from political preference and recover a faithful public witness that keeps Christ and His Gospel at the center.

Source: *Pastor Joshua Dool of Praxis Church in Kelowna, British Columbia.

Should the Church Care About the Nation? Why?

Yes—but not because Canada, Alberta, or any political arrangement is ultimate. The Church cares about the nation because Jesus taught us to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). That prayer does not allow Christians to treat public life as someone else’s concern. If God’s Kingdom touches real life, then it touches worship, family, work, justice, mercy, truth, neighbour-love, and the way communities are shaped. Christians are citizens of heaven first (Philippians 3:20), but that does not make us careless about the places where we live. It teaches us to seek the welfare of the community where God has placed us (Jeremiah 29:7), while keeping Christ—not the nation—at the centre of our hope.

This concern for nations runs through the whole biblical story. God called Abraham so that “all peoples on earth” would be blessed through him (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). The New Testament tells us that this promise is fulfilled in Christ, Abraham’s true seed, through whom God’s blessing goes out to the nations (Galatians 3:8, 14, 16, 29). Jesus then sends his Church with the Great Commission: “make disciples of all nations,” teaching them to obey everything he commanded (Matthew 28:18–20). That means discipleship is not only about individual hearts, as vital as that is. It also has something to say to cultures, communities, public habits, institutions, and shared ways of life. The Gospel blesses people personally, but it also calls whole peoples toward the truth, justice, mercy, and healing reign of Christ.

That is why public life matters to discipleship. Laws, schools, economies, courts, freedoms, families, and civic habits all shape how neighbours live. They affect whether people can worship freely, speak truthfully, work honestly, raise children faithfully, protect the vulnerable, and pursue the common good. Scripture does not call the Church to control the state, and it never allows us to confuse any nation with the Kingdom of God. But it does call us to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16), to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8), to pray for those in authority so people may live peaceful and dignified lives (1 Timothy 2:1–4), and to hold before the world the final biblical vision: the healing of the nations (Revelation 7:9; 21:24; 22:2).

So, should the Church care about the nation? Yes. The Church cares as an act of worship, mission, and neighbour-love. We care because Christ is Lord over all creation. We care because God’s promise to Abraham was always aimed at blessing the nations. We care because Jesus sends his followers to disciple the nations. And we care because our public witness should give our neighbours a small preview of God’s Kingdom coming “on earth as it is in heaven.” This does not make the Church partisan. It makes the Church responsible: prayerful, truthful, humble, courageous, charitable, and attentive to what helps people and communities flourish before God.

Guide for Biblical Conversations on Hot Political Topics

A non-partisan resource inviting pastors and church leaders to guide thoughtful, biblical conversations about Alberta independence, public life, and faithful Christian witness. This guide offers background on current public concerns, a small group discussion manual, biblical and theological reflection, and practical tools to help churches listen well, speak charitably, and discern faithfully together. Although the focus is Alberta Independence conversation, it can be adapted to engage any political topic.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help pastors, elders, and ministry leaders lead biblical conversations about Alberta's current political context, including questions related to independence, governance, and the future of the province. Its central purpose is to help leaders answer the pastoral question beneath the political question: how should the Church help its people think, speak, pray, vote, and act faithfully when major public decisions affect families, freedoms, stewardship, justice, conscience, and the common good?

The Church's calling is not to become a partisan movement, but neither is it called to silence when public questions are shaping the lives of families and communities. Pastors need more than encouragement to engage; they need practical tools, biblical categories, conversation guardrails, and pastoral strategies that protect unity while forming mature Christian discernment. This guide is meant to provide that framework.

Leaders may use this guide to help congregants ask better questions: What kind of government and public order best serves people overall? What responsibilities do Christians have as citizens, neighbours, parents, workers, and church members? What threats and opportunities are on the horizon for the Church's witness in Alberta? How can believers engage the independence conversation without fear, contempt, political idolatry, or disengagement?

Reminder: this guide answers the role-and-responsibility question by helping pastors form biblical discernment, not by prescribing one political conclusion.

Each section follows the same pattern:

- **Issue Framing** — what kind of public question is being discussed and why it matters.
- **Biblical Foundations** — key passages and brief explanations to ground the conversation.
- **Questions for Discernment** — prompts that help leaders and congregants think carefully rather than react quickly.
- **Pastoral Guidance** — counsel on tone, posture, and spiritual responsibility.
- **Reflection Questions** — practical prompts for leaders, boards, or discussion groups.

The Small Group Discussion Guide turns the main question into guided conversations so congregants can practice informed, prayerful, and charitable discernment together.

A Kingdom Posture in a Politicized Moment

Conversations about Alberta's future often bring strong opinions, deep frustrations, and genuine uncertainty. Some people view independence as a necessary path to greater freedom or responsibility. Others see it as unwise, divisive, or destabilizing. Pastors and church leaders will encounter both concerns and convictions within their congregations.

For that reason, the first task of the Church is not to produce political agreement. It is to cultivate a Kingdom posture: one marked by truthfulness, humility, courage, patience, love of neighbor, and confidence in the reign of Christ. This is one reason the biblical Greek

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word *ekklesia* is so important. In its civic setting, it referred to an assembly called out from the community to receive instruction from a ruler or governing authority and then to carry that message back to the people from whom they came. In that sense, the Church's calling has always had a public dimension. The Church is gathered to hear the word of the King of kings and then sent back into the community to embody and relay that message faithfully. Church leaders do not need to eliminate disagreement in order to lead well. They do need to help believers engage these questions without fear, hostility, or political idolatry.

A healthy pastoral approach will keep at least three things in view. First, Christ's Kingdom is ultimate, while political arrangements are always temporary and limited. Second, public questions still matter because they affect justice, stewardship, freedom, family life, and the common good. Third, the Church must resist the temptation to become either silent and disengaged or partisan and reactionary.

Pastoral reminder: the Church's responsibility is to keep Christ ultimate while helping believers engage Alberta's future with truth, humility, courage, and love of neighbour.

1. Authority, Citizenship, and the Lordship of Christ

Issue Framing

Questions about Alberta's political future quickly raise deeper questions about authority, loyalty, and citizenship. What do Christians owe to civil governments? How should believers think about provinces, nations, and changing political arrangements? When should Christians support reform, and when should they exercise caution? Before debating specific outcomes, pastors need to help congregations place all political questions under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Biblical Foundations

- **Psalm 24:1** — “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.” Political questions begin with the recognition that all authority and all lands ultimately belong to God.
- **Daniel 2:21** — God “changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings.” Scripture reminds believers that political structures are not ultimate or permanent.
- **Matthew 22:21** — Jesus distinguishes what belongs to Caesar from what belongs to God, teaching civic responsibility without granting the state ultimate allegiance.
- **Philippians 3:20** — Christians are citizens of heaven, which keeps earthly loyalties in their proper place.
- **Acts 5:29** — The apostles affirm that obedience to God must come before obedience to human authority when the two are in conflict.

Questions for Discernment

Pastors can help congregations ask questions such as: What kind of political loyalty is appropriate for Christians? How do we honor governing authority without treating any political structure as sacred? What would it mean to discuss Alberta's future in a way that reflects Christian hope rather than fear or anger?

Pastoral Guidance

At this stage, leaders should resist pressure to move too quickly into endorsement or rejection. The pastoral task is to establish spiritual perspective first. That means naming Christ's authority, discouraging political absolutism, and helping people remember that our deepest identity is found in the Kingdom of God rather than in any constitutional arrangement.

How this answers the primary question: pastors help the Church place every civic loyalty beneath Christ before asking what political arrangement is best.

Reflection Questions

- How can we teach civic responsibility without confusing it with ultimate loyalty?

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- What language will help our people speak about Alberta’s future in a way that is calm, truthful, and Kingdom-centered?

2. Stewardship, Economics, and the Common Good

Issue Framing

Economic concerns are among the main reasons many Albertans are discussing the province’s future. Questions about taxation, equalization, regulation, energy policy, and fiscal control can provoke strong reactions. Yet for the Church, economics must be framed not only in terms of prosperity or grievance, but also in terms of stewardship, justice, work, provision, and the common good.

Biblical Foundations

- **Genesis 41:33–36** — Joseph’s counsel in Egypt shows the wisdom of prudence, planning, and responsible administration in times of economic pressure.
- **Leviticus 25:23–24** — The land belongs ultimately to God, reminding believers that economic life is a matter of stewardship rather than absolute possession.
- **Proverbs 11:1** — Honest scales matter to the Lord, grounding economic discussion in integrity and fairness.
- **Proverbs 13:22** — Scripture values provision for future generations, encouraging long-term rather than purely immediate thinking.
- **Luke 16:10–11** — Faithfulness in material matters has spiritual significance and cannot be treated as morally neutral.

Questions for Discernment

Which economic concerns are rooted in genuine stewardship and which are driven mainly by resentment or fear?

Pastors can help congregations ask: Which economic concerns are rooted in genuine stewardship and which are driven mainly by resentment or fear? How do current policies affect families, workers, churches, and future generations? What forms of economic responsibility should Christians commend regardless of their political conclusions?

Pastoral Guidance

Church leaders do not need to become economic experts in order to lead faithfully. They do need to help people think beyond slogans and ask what kinds of policies or arrangements encourage honesty, productive work, family stability, care for the vulnerable, and long-term stewardship. The goal is not partisan certainty, but moral clarity.

How this answers the primary question: pastors help congregants judge economic claims by stewardship, justice, honesty, family stability, and the common good.

Reflection Questions

- How do we keep economic concerns connected to stewardship and discipleship rather than grievance alone?
- What economic pressures are most directly shaping the lives of the people we serve?

3. Family, Community, and Social Responsibility

Issue Framing

Political debates are never only about constitutions or jurisdiction. They also shape families, communities, education, moral formation, and public trust. For many believers, concerns about Alberta's future are connected to deeper questions about cultural direction, parental responsibility, conscience, and the kind of society future generations will inherit.

Biblical Foundations

- **Genesis 18:19** — Abraham is called to direct his household in the way of the Lord, linking covenant faithfulness with family leadership.
- **Deuteronomy 6:6–9** — God's words are to be taught diligently in the home, showing the family as a primary place of spiritual formation.
- **Psalms 78:5–7** — One generation is to tell the next the works of God, emphasizing continuity of faith and hope.
- **Proverbs 22:6** — The training of children is treated as a serious formative responsibility.
- **Ephesians 6:1–4** — Parents are called to nurture children with both authority and loving formation.

Questions for Discernment

Pastors can help congregations ask: How do public decisions affect the ability of families to flourish? What responsibilities do churches have to strengthen households, support parents, and care for children in times of cultural change? How can believers speak about contested social questions with both conviction and compassion?

Pastoral Guidance

This category requires special care. Leaders should avoid treating people as enemies, even where convictions differ sharply. At the same time, pastoral love does not require moral confusion. The Church serves families best when it speaks with clarity, gentleness, and a commitment to both truth and compassion.

How this answers the primary question: pastors help the Church consider how public decisions shape families, children, conscience, and moral formation.

How do public decisions affect the ability of families to flourish?

Reflection Questions

- How can we speak about family and social responsibility in a way that is both biblically faithful and pastorally wise?
- What questions are families in our congregation already carrying that need thoughtful guidance?

4. Work, Resource Stewardship, and Alberta's Vocation

Issue Framing

Alberta's identity has long been shaped by work, enterprise, agriculture, energy, trades, and responsible use of natural resources. Discussions about independence often draw strength from the perception that Alberta's labor and resources are not being fairly regarded or stewarded. Pastors do not need to settle every policy question, but they should help congregants think biblically about vocation, work, provision, and the stewardship of what God has entrusted.

Biblical Foundations

- **Genesis 2:15** — Humanity is placed in the garden to work it and keep it, showing that labor and stewardship are part of God's good design.
- **Exodus 20:9–10** — Work is good, but it must be ordered under God and balanced by rest.
- **Proverbs 14:23** — Honest labor is commended as fruitful, while empty talk is contrasted with productive effort.
- **Colossians 3:23–24** — Believers are called to work wholeheartedly as serving the Lord.
- **1 Timothy 5:8** — Provision for one's household is treated as a serious moral responsibility.

In what ways might political decisions strengthen or weaken the conditions needed for productive labor and family stability?

Questions for Discernment

Questions for congregational discussion may include: What does faithful stewardship of Alberta's resources look like? How should Christians think about work, industry, and economic contribution in ways that honor both creation and community? In what ways might political decisions strengthen or weaken the conditions needed for productive labor and family stability?

Pastoral Guidance

Leaders should help people see that work and stewardship are not secondary matters. They are deeply connected to discipleship, provision, generosity, dignity, and service to neighbor. At the same time, the Church should avoid reducing its message to

economic self-interest. Christian reflection must always ask not only what is beneficial, but also what is just, honest, and life-giving.

How this answers the primary question: pastors help believers connect Alberta's work, resources, and vocation to faithful stewardship rather than resentment or self-interest.

Reflection Questions

- How can we help our people connect work and resource stewardship with discipleship rather than mere political frustration?
- What would it mean to speak about Alberta's calling in a way that is grateful, sober, and morally serious?

5. The Church's Public Witness: Presence Without Partisanship

Issue Framing

One of the greatest challenges for pastors in a politically charged moment is to know how the Church should be present in public life. Some believers want the Church to take strong political positions. Others fear that any public engagement will compromise the gospel. A faithful path requires a form of presence that is morally serious, biblically grounded, and clearly distinct from partisan capture.

Biblical Foundations

Jeremiah 29:7 — God's people are told to seek the welfare of the city, showing that faithful presence includes concern for public good.

Romans 13:1–4 — Civil authority is accountable under God for the ordering of public life, which invites Christians to take government seriously without treating it as ultimate.

1 Peter 2:13–17 — Christians are called to honor governing authorities while living as servants of God.

Micah 6:8 — God's people are called to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God, giving the Church a moral posture for public engagement.

Matthew 5:13–16 — The people of God are to be salt and light, bearing visible witness in the world.

Questions for Discernment

Leaders can ask: What does it look like for the Church to contribute moral clarity without becoming an arm of a political movement? How can we encourage believers to

How can we encourage believers to engage responsibly in civic life while preserving unity in the body of Christ?

engage responsibly in civic life while preserving unity in the body of Christ? What posture will best help our congregations remain truthful, prayerful, and peaceable?

Where do our people most need help distinguishing Christian conviction from partisan identity?

Pastoral Guidance

Church leaders should be careful not to bind consciences where Scripture does not bind them. Not every faithful Christian will reach the same political conclusion about Alberta's future. The role of the Church is not to manufacture uniformity on every civic question, but to form people who think biblically, speak truthfully, love their neighbors, and resist the temptation to baptize partisan anger as Christian conviction.

How this answers the primary question: pastors guide the Church toward public presence without partisan capture, silence, or contempt.

Reflection Questions

- How can we model public engagement that is courageous without becoming combative?
- Where do our people most need help distinguishing Christian conviction from partisan identity?

Leading the Church in a Time of Decision

No guide can remove all complexity from a moment like this. Nor can any church document settle every political question. What pastors and church leaders can do is something more important: they can help congregations think biblically, refuse fear, avoid hatred, and remain rooted in the lordship of Christ as they face difficult public questions.

This guide is best used slowly and prayerfully. Leaders may wish to work through one section at a time in a board meeting, leadership retreat, small discussion group, or congregational teaching setting. The aim is not political mobilization. The aim is pastoral formation, biblical discernment, and faithful public witness.

In summary, the role of the Church is to disciple public responsibility; the role of pastors and leaders is to provide biblical categories, guardrails for conversation, practical tools, prayerful leadership, and courage without partisanship.

- Begin with prayer and Scripture rather than headlines.
- Use one category at a time and allow discussion to develop slowly.
- Encourage participants to distinguish biblical principle from political preference.
- End with intercession for civic leaders, churches, families, and the province.

Guide for Small Group Conversations

Purpose. This guide helps facilitators lead small groups, ministry teams, or congregational conversations that are biblical, charitable, and prayerful. The aim is not to win an argument or force agreement on Alberta independence, but to form people who think and live faithfully under the lordship of Christ.

Facilitator posture. Begin and end with prayer. Encourage patience rather than pressure, curiosity rather than caricature, and careful listening before response. Remind the group that

Christians may share the same Lord while differing on political application.

For larger groups. Divide participants into groups of 3–5. Assign one session or question to each group, then invite each group to share one key insight, one concern, and one prayer request with the larger gathering.

Session pattern.

- 1) Individually complete the **Discussion Starters** using the 1–5 scale, then briefly explain your responses.
- 2) Read the **Scripture** aloud and pray for humility, wisdom, courage, and charity.
- 3) Read the **Key Idea** together.
- 4) Discuss the Key Idea and Reflection questions, listening carefully before responding.
- 5) Identify one practical **Taking Action** response.
- 6) Close by praying for leaders, churches, families, and the province.

Conversation guardrails. Distinguish biblical principles from political preferences. Do not assign motives to those who disagree. Avoid slogans, contempt, conspiracy claims, or partisan pressure. When tension rises, pause, reread Scripture, and ask, “What would faithful witness to Christ require of us right now?”

Suggested Scripture and opening prayer. Read Matthew 5:13–16; Micah 6:8; Jeremiah 29:7; and Philippians 3:20. Ask God to give humility, wisdom, charity toward those who differ, and clarity about how to live as faithful disciples in public life.

Session 1: A Kingdom Posture in a Politicized Moment

Session Aim	This session helps Christians stay rooted in Christ while engaging public questions with humility, courage, and hope.
Discussion Starters	Use the scale 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Unsure or mixed; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree. 1. A church that only talks about personal salvation is telling the world that public suffering does not matter. 2. If a church avoids controversial public issues, it may be protecting comfort more than witness. 3. The way Christians talk about politics often reveals what they trust more than what they believe.
Scripture	Philippians 3:20; Matthew 22:21; Jeremiah 29:7.
Key Idea	Christians live with dual awareness: our deepest citizenship is in heaven, yet we are called to seek the good of the communities where God has placed us. Political questions matter, but they must never become ultimate. In a season of strong opinions and uncertainty, believers need to remember that their first loyalty is to Jesus Christ and his Kingdom. This does not lead to withdrawal from public life; it calls Christians to engage civic questions with humility, truthfulness, prayer, and neighbour love rather than fear, anger, or partisan identity.
Discuss	What does it mean to say that our primary citizenship is in heaven while we still carry real responsibilities in civic life? How does that truth change the tone of political conversations?
Reflect	Where do you most feel fear, frustration, or confusion when public issues arise? What helps you return to a Christ-centred posture? What might the Church need to unlearn in order to be faithful and effective in this season?
Taking Action	Identify one way you can respond differently in conversations this month so that your posture reflects truthfulness, patience, and neighbour love.
Notes / Prayer	Closing reflection: What is one thing you learned, one fear to surrender to God, and one faithful action to take? Prayer prompt: Pray for wisdom for public leaders, courage for pastors and churches, peace within congregations, and faithful witness under Christ's lordship.

Session 2: Stewardship, Debt, and the Common Good

Session Aim	This session explores how Christians can think biblically about stewardship, debt, and responsibility to future generations in a time of economic pressure.
Discussion Starters	Use the scale 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Unsure or mixed; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree. 1. A society that keeps borrowing from the future is teaching its children that responsibility can be delayed. 2. It is morally dishonest to demand public benefits while refusing to face their real cost. 3. Christians who defend economic freedom but ignore economic fairness are only telling half the truth.
Scripture	Genesis 41:33–36; Proverbs 13:22; Luke 16:10–11.
Key Idea	Debt, taxation, and public spending raise moral questions about stewardship, honesty, responsibility, and future generations. Many Albertans feel economic pressure personally, so Christians should avoid discussing economics only through frustration, self-interest, or blame. Scripture teaches that resources are a trust from God, requiring prudence, fairness, care for families, and concern for those who come after us.
Discuss	How should Christians think about public debt, taxation, and economic stewardship? What makes an economic concern principled rather than reactionary?
Reflect	In what ways do economic pressures affect families, churches, and communities in Alberta? Where do you see the need for both realism and hope?
Taking Action	Name one practical step you can take to strengthen stewardship in your household, church, or community, and one way to pray more intelligently about public economic life.
Notes / Prayer	Closing reflection: What is one thing you learned, one fear to surrender to God, and one faithful action to take? Prayer prompt: Pray for wisdom for public leaders, courage for pastors and churches, peace within congregations, and a faithful witness that reflects Christ's lordship in economic life.

Session 3: Family, Community, and Moral Formation

Session Aim	This session considers how public life affects families, children, and moral formation, and how the Church can respond with both truth and compassion.
Discussion Starters	Use the scale 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Unsure or mixed; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree. 1. If the Church is silent about who is shaping children, it has already allowed someone else to disciple them. 2. Parents who hand moral formation to schools, screens, or culture should not be surprised by the results. 3. A church that is afraid to call any idea harmful may be confusing compassion with cowardice.
Scripture	Deuteronomy 6:6–9; Psalm 78:5–7; Ephesians 6:1–4.
Key Idea	Public issues shape family life, children’s formation, and community health. Many Christians are concerned not only about laws or policies, but about the moral environment in which households raise children, teach faith, and practice responsibility. Scripture presents the family as a primary place of nurture and generational faithfulness, calling churches to respond with clarity and compassion.
Discuss	How do public policies and cultural shifts affect families and the formation of children? How can the Church speak with both conviction and compassion?
Reflect	Where do you see the greatest need for clarity, courage, and practical support for families in the Church today?
Taking Action	Identify one way your small group or church could strengthen families, encourage parents, or support the formation of children in this season.
Notes / Prayer	Closing reflection: What is one thing you learned, one fear to surrender to God, and one faithful action to take? Prayer prompt: Pray for wisdom for public leaders, courage for pastors and churches, peace within congregations, and faithful witness that reflects the lordship of Christ in family and community life.

Session 4: Public Witness Without Partisanship

Session Aim	This session focuses on how the Church can speak and serve in public life without becoming fearful, silent, or captive to partisanship.
Discussion Starters	Use the scale 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Unsure or mixed; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree. 1. A church that never offends anyone may be more committed to approval than faithfulness. 2. When a church sounds more passionate about public issues than about Jesus, it has already lost its way. 3. Christians who are unwilling to lose public approval may not be ready to speak truth in love.
Scripture	Jeremiah 29:7; Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:13–16.
Key Idea	The Church is called to be present in public life without being captured by partisanship. Faithful witness requires courage, humility, moral clarity, and love of neighbour. In a divided culture, some Christians are tempted to withdraw from public questions, while others are tempted to treat political movements as if they were the hope of the Church. Scripture points to a better way: believers seek the good of their communities, do justice, walk humbly with God, and bear visible witness to truth. The goal is not silence or partisan control, but public presence shaped by the character of Christ.
Discuss	What does faithful public witness look like when Christians in the same church do not all share the same political conclusions? How can we stay engaged without becoming combative?
Reflect	Where do you see the greatest temptation toward silence, fear, anger, or political idolatry in Christian public life?
Taking Action	Name one habit, practice, or commitment that could help you engage public issues more prayerfully, truthfully, and peaceably.
Notes / Prayer	Closing reflection: What is one thing you learned, one fear to surrender to God, and one faithful action to take? Prayer prompt: Pray for wisdom for public leaders, courage for pastors and churches, peace within congregations, and faithful witness that reflects the lordship of Christ in every sphere of life.

Appendices: Extra Resources for Study

1. Public Concerns Frequently Raised by Canadian Christians

This appendix names several public concerns that many Canadian Christians have been talking about in recent years. It does not assume that every believer sees these issues the same way, and it is not meant to tell people what political conclusion they should reach. Its purpose is simply to help pastors, church leaders, and congregations understand the kinds of concerns that often shape these conversations, using language that is clear, thoughtful, and non-partisan.

Concern #1. Freedom of Expression and Public Speech

Freedom of Expression Concerns for Christians in Canada

Many Christians in Canada worry that there is less room for honest public disagreement. They fear that their Bible-based beliefs on marriage, sexuality, gender, conscience, and the sanctity of life are being seen not just as unpopular, but as harmful or hateful. Recent federal bills have increased these worries about freedom of speech and religious expression.

Bill C-9: The Combatting Hate Act

This law received Royal Assent on June 18, 2026. Its main changes to the Criminal Code took effect on July 18, 2026. It creates new offences for intimidating or obstructing people outside places of worship and other important spots used by identifiable groups. It also sets up a specific hate-crime offence, defines “hatred,” and bans public display of certain terrorism or hate symbols.

These rules address real issues like antisemitism, attacks on religious communities, and public intimidation. Christians support protecting people from genuine hatred and violence.

However, the bill removes the old “good faith” religious defence. This defence once protected honest opinions based on religion or religious texts. The government says the law does not ban preaching, teaching, prayer, or reading Scripture. Even so, many Christian and faith groups worry it creates uncertainty. They fear a “chilling effect” that could make people afraid to share biblical teachings on debated moral issues.

Bill C-34: The Safe Social Media Act

Introduced on June 10, 2026, this bill revives parts of Bill C-63, which raised similar concerns about freedom of expression under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; it proposed new rules for online content and sparked debate over how “harmful” speech would be handled. C-34 is still at the first-reading stage and has not passed. It would create a Digital Safety Act and a Digital Safety Commission to regulate social media, AI services, and online platforms. Goals include stronger child protection,

age verification (possibly banning social media for under-16s), and “safety by design” to reduce hate speech and other harms.

Critics worry that broad definitions of harmful content and new regulatory powers could lead to over-censorship. This might pressure platforms to limit peaceful religious views on contested topics. Many details would be set later through regulations.

The Bigger Picture

Christians and civil liberties groups support laws that protect people from real hate and violence. At the same time, they question whether Canada’s laws will clearly protect sincere, peaceful religious expression in public life—even when those beliefs are unpopular.

As of late June 2026, Bill C-9 is the most urgent concern since it is now law. Bill C-34 is still early and could change. Faith communities are encouraged to follow how these rules are used in practice and to speak up for strong protections for honest religious teaching.

The key challenge is balancing real protections against harm while keeping space for respectful disagreement and biblical beliefs in Canada.

Sources: parl.ca (Bill C-9 LEGISinfo); justice.gc.ca (Combating Hate Act backgrounder; Charter Statement for Bill C-9; Charter Statement for Bill C-63); canada.ca (Proposed bill to address online harms); evangelicalfellowship.ca (Bill C-9: Combating Hate Act; Letter to the Prime Minister on Bill C-9; Bill C-63: Online Harms Act); cccc.org (Bill C-9: What’s at Stake for Religious Expression?; Bill C-9: Impact on Religious Expression in Canada); cbc.ca (Contentious anti-hate legislation passes final vote in the House); theccf.ca (Bill C-9 has passed. Here’s what you need to know.)
<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/safe-social-media-act.html>.

Concern #2. Truth, Media Discernment, and the Challenge of Misinformation

Knowing what is true in a media environment shaped by speed, selective framing, outrage, misinformation, and deliberate disinformation, is very challenging. The abundance of information has not always produced wisdom. News reports, commentary, social media, podcasts, advertisements, search engines, viral clips, and even messages from trusted friends can all shape perception before facts have been carefully examined. For the Church, the issue is not simply whether falsehood exists. It is whether God’s people are being formed to recognize truth, resist manipulation, and respond in ways that reflect the character of Christ.

A Christian approach to truth begins with humility. No one knows everything, so believers should listen before speaking, examine the log in their own eye, and remain teachable even when they suspect someone else is wrong. It also requires relational faithfulness. Families and churches can be pulled apart by competing claims of “truth,” so Christians must let grace and truth travel together. Finally, discernment must be ordered toward God’s glory. The Church can trust that God is at work even when public life appears confusing, contested, or shaded with complexity.

Several practical plumb lines can help Christians discern responsibly. First, ask whether the source is reliable. Slick presentation does not equal truth, and original sources should be traceable. Second, ask whether the evidence is verifiable. Facts, quotations, statistics, and claims should be open to examination by others. Third, follow the interests involved: who has money, power, reputation, influence, or something to gain or lose? Fourth, weigh credentials and experience without treating experts as infallible. Fifth, look for original or early sources rather than relying only on summaries, commentary, or “fact checkers” that do not show their work. Sixth, ask where the burden of proof belongs. The one making a claim should provide evidence, logic, and openness to critique. Seventh, notice whether dialogue is welcomed or shut down. Truth can withstand honest questions. Propaganda, groupthink, gaslighting, and astroturfing often use slogans, labels, or social pressure to make sincere questioning feel foolish or immoral. Above all, ask whether the matter is being tested biblically. Scripture may not answer every public question directly, but it teaches God’s people how to think rightly: to be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; to test what they hear; to seek multiple witnesses; to reject gossip and false testimony; and to speak the truth in love. In an age of misinformation, the Church’s witness should be neither panic nor parroting, but patient listening, careful testing, humble correction, and confidence in the God whose Word stands forever.

Sources: (Proverbs 18:13, 17; James 1:19; Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1; Ephesians 4:15; Philippians 4:8).

Concern #3. Freedom of Religion, Conscience, and Religious Expression

A third concern is the freedom to live out Christian conviction openly and consistently, not only in private worship but also in teaching, ministry, charity, education, and public service. For many believers, religious freedom is not just about what a person may believe inwardly. It is also about whether churches, ministries, schools, and individual Christians can continue to speak and act from those beliefs in public life. One recent example is Bill C-9, which raised concern because amendments debated in Parliament involved removing a long-standing legal protection for the good-faith expression of religious belief in certain hate-speech cases. Parliament of Canada documents show that this was part of the debate, and The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada argued that these protections matter because religious communities need room to express sincerely held convictions even when those views are not widely accepted. More broadly, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada continues to describe religious freedom as the freedom to hold and live out belief personally, communally, privately, and publicly.

Sources: parl.ca (Bill C-9 LEGISinfo; Bill C-9 first, second, and third reading texts); evangelicalfellowship.ca (Religious Freedom in Canada; Update on Bill C-9).

Concern #4. Public Debt, Fiscal Stewardship, and Responsibility to Future Generations

Many Christians are also troubled by the scale of public debt in Canada and what it may mean for the future. For them, this is not only an economic issue but also a moral one. Heavy borrowing today can shape the opportunities, responsibilities, and burdens of future generations. The federal government's Annual Financial Report of the Government of Canada Fiscal Year 2024–2025 reported an annual operating deficit of \$36.3 billion, and The Fiscal Monitor - November 2025 reported a budgetary deficit of \$26.4 billion for April to November 2025, along with rising public debt charges. Christians who think in terms of stewardship, inheritance, and responsibility often ask whether current borrowing patterns are wise, sustainable, and fair to those who will come after us.

Sources: canada.ca (Annual Financial Report of the Government of Canada Fiscal Year 2024–2025; The Fiscal Monitor - November 2025).

Concern #5. The Public Place of Faith Communities and the Risk of Secular Exclusion

A fifth concern is the public place of faith communities in Canadian life. Many Christians sense that religion is increasingly expected to remain private, while its role in public conversation, education, service, and charity becomes more fragile. This concern is not mainly about preserving privilege. It is about whether churches and other faith-based organizations will still be welcome to contribute openly to the common good as religious communities. Cardus has described religion as holding an increasingly delicate place in Canadian society, and The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada has warned that growing secular pressures may reduce the public space available for religious communities and institutions. For many Christians, the question is whether faith communities will still be allowed to serve, speak, and participate in public life in ways that are open about their convictions.

Sources: cardus.ca (The Shifting Landscape of Faith in Canada); evangelicalfellowship.ca (Religious Freedom in Canada; Religious freedom and religious diversity).

Concern #6. Alberta's Future, National Responsibility, and the Christian Debate Over Independence

A sixth concern is specific to Alberta itself: whether independence from Canada would represent a faithful response to present realities or a failure of national solidarity. Some Christians believe Alberta has a distinctive calling within Canada and even see the province as a possible catalyst for renewal. Others worry that independence could be driven more by grievance, self-protection, or political frustration than by love, generosity, and responsibility to the wider common good. The more important pastoral question is not simply whether Alberta should stay or go, but how Christians can weigh justice, stewardship, unity, freedom, neighbour-love, and witness before God in the middle of that debate.

A wiser approach avoids framing the issue as a simple choice between courage and selfishness. Christians should ask deeper questions: What arrangement best serves justice, stewardship, peace, freedom, and responsibility before God? What course of action would best protect families, strengthen local communities, and contribute to the common good? What direction has the best potential to reflect the Kingdom of God in public life, and why? These questions do not settle the debate automatically, but they help move the conversation from reaction to discernment.

For pastors and church leaders, this subject requires unusual care. Alberta's future is not a small matter, and Christians may reach different conclusions in good faith. The Church should make room for serious moral reflection while refusing two opposite errors: treating independence as a test of faithfulness, or dismissing all support for it as morally suspect. A faithful pastoral approach asks what posture, principles, and witness will honour Christ whichever political path people believe is best.

None of these concerns should be discussed in a spirit of alarmism or hostility. Pastors and church leaders can help congregations distinguish principled concern from partisan reaction, ground the conversation in Scripture, and remember that faithful witness requires both courage and charity.

Sources: lop.parl.ca (Parliament of Canada material on Canada's motto, "from sea to sea"); Psalm 72:8; internal pastoral and discussion materials prepared for this guide.



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2. Reclaiming the Church's Voice

Many congregations affirm in principle that the Church should have a public voice, yet far fewer have clarified how that public engagement should actually take shape. What matters most is honest discernment about a church's present posture, its preferred future, and the gap between the two. That gap often reveals where leadership clarity, courage, and strategic work are most needed.

Before assessing strategy, churches may need to begin with repentance. Much of the Church in Canada has laboured faithfully in evangelism, discipleship, and pastoral care, yet has often been hesitant or disengaged in public witness. We have sometimes treated personal salvation as though it could be separated from public discipleship, moral courage, and neighbour love. In *The Battle for the Soul of Canada*, Grant S. Abraham raises this challenge. "We are here now in this troubling condition because the Christian Church failed to be a catalyzing voice shaping Canada with God's principles and laws, as past generations had." (pg 99). Whether one agrees with every part of his analysis or not, the exhortation deserves serious reflection. Repentance means confessing where fear, comfort, silence, or privatized faith have weakened the Church's witness, and asking God to renew in us courage, humility, truthfulness, and public love.

Mark Wessner presents five broad postures that often shape how churches relate to the surrounding culture.

1. The **World Contender** speaks directly and publicly into contested issues, accepting the cost of being heard.
2. The **World Transformer** works from within existing structures, influencing culture through relationships, presence, and proximity.
3. The **World Creator** builds alternatives such as schools, ministries, and institutions.
4. The **World Renouncer** withdraws as a form of protest or spiritual focus.
5. The **World Acceptor** largely avoids engagement and stays quiet.

None of these patterns is always right in every era, but churches benefit from naming honestly which one is most shaping their life in the present moment.

These postures can be seen across several dimensions of congregational life: pulpit and teaching, programs and budget, leadership development, posture toward outsiders, response to cultural moments, and the church's own self-understanding. What matters is not only what a church says it values, but what its actual patterns reveal in practice. Behavior often tells the truth more clearly than aspiration. Honest assessment can be uncomfortable, but that discomfort is often what opens the way to deeper clarity and wiser leadership.

Agreement and disagreement within a leadership team can both be revealing. Strong agreement about a church's current posture may indicate healthy shared awareness.

What matters is not only what a church says it values, but what its actual patterns reveal in practice.

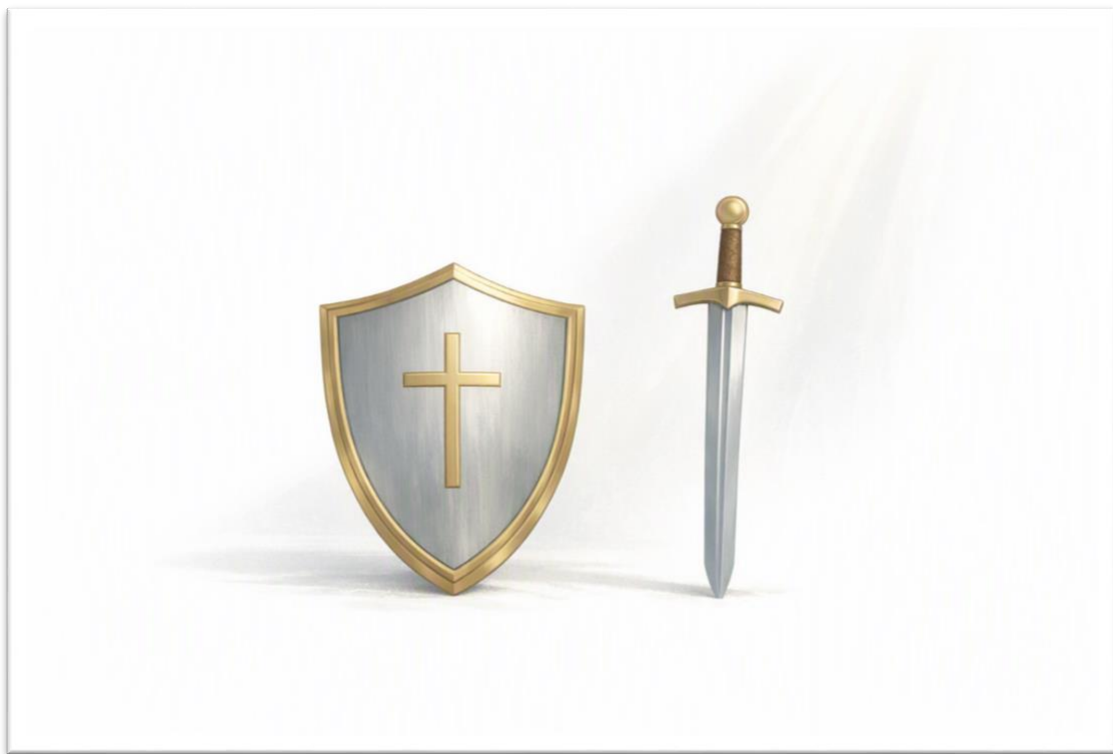
Sharp disagreement may show that leaders are seeing different parts of the same church, or that they are working with different assumptions about what matters most. If the greatest tension lies in the preferred future, that often points to a deeper values conversation that still needs to happen. Even differences between how a pastor understands his own ministry and how others experience it can become a source of insight rather than failure.

Clarity matters. Many churches are not yet where they hope to be, and many leadership teams already sense that even if they have not named it clearly. In the Canadian context, the Church especially needs leaders who are willing both to contend and to transform—leaders who can recover public theology, speak with courage, and help their people re-engage public life faithfully. These insights can help church leaders reflect more carefully on how their own congregation is relating to culture in this moment.

Sources:

Grant S. Abraham, *The Battle for the Soul of Canada: Firing the Forge*, © 2023

Mark Wessner, *Reclaiming the Church's Voice: A Call for Pastors and Denominational Leaders to Re-engage Public Theology*, 2026.



3. Church, State, Allegiance, and Public Witness

This appendix offers a concise, non-partisan, and non-denominational theological framework for pastors leading congregations through tense public conversations, especially those related to Alberta independence. It does not tell congregants what conclusion they must reach, nor does it require agreement on the long-standing Christian debate between pacifist and just-war traditions. Its purpose is to help pastors teach Scripture carefully, make room for sincere Christian disagreement, and keep the Church's first allegiance fixed on King Jesus rather than on any government, party, nation, province, or political movement.

Romans 13:1–7 — Civil Authority as Limited and Accountable

Romans 13 must be read within the flow of Romans 12–13. Immediately before Paul speaks about governing authorities, he forbids personal vengeance and commands believers to overcome evil with good. Immediately after, he summarizes the law as love of neighbour. This context prevents a simplistic reading. Paul is not giving the state unlimited sacred status; he is teaching Christians to live peaceably, responsibly, and publicly under civil authority.

Government is described as a servant for the good, especially in restraining wrongdoing and preserving public order. Yet servant language also limits the state. Government is not divine, autonomous, or ultimate; it is accountable to God and exists for the public good. Romans 13 therefore supports respect for law, prayer for leaders, taxation, and civic responsibility, while still leaving room for critique, reform, conscientious objection, and prophetic witness when government acts unjustly.

Revelation 13 — Political Power When It Becomes Ultimate

Revelation 13 provides a necessary counterweight to any reading of Scripture that treats government as automatically righteous simply because it exists. In Revelation, political power becomes spiritually dangerous when it demands worship, punishes faithful witness, deceives people, or pressures allegiance in ways that belong only to God. The issue is not government itself, but government or any political power becoming ultimate.

The beast imagery warns pastors to help congregations discern when fear, propaganda, coercion, or unquestioned loyalty begins to shape the soul. Revelation should not be used as a weapon against one political side or as a label for every disliked policy. It should help Christians ask: What is being treated as ultimate? What loyalties are being demanded? Where might trust be requested that belongs only to Christ? Christians may honour civil authority and still refuse to worship it.

Acts 5:29 — Faithful Obedience When Authority Conflicts with God

Acts 5:29 gives the Church a vital principle: “We must obey God rather than human beings.” The apostles are not rejecting authority because they dislike structure; they are refusing a command that directly contradicts Christ's mission. Their obedience is specific, public, costly, and rooted in fidelity to God rather than political reaction.

This passage does not authorize impulsive rebellion, contempt for law, or spiritualized anger. It does teach that Christian obedience to civil authority is real but not absolute. When human authority commands what God forbids or forbids what God commands, believers must obey God with courage, humility, truthfulness, willingness to bear consequences, and refusal to demonize opponents.

1 Peter 2:13–17 — Honour Without Ultimate Allegiance

Peter writes to Christians who are socially vulnerable and often misunderstood. His call to submit to human institutions belongs within a larger call to live honourably among neighbours who may not share Christian faith. This is not groveling fear or unquestioning compliance, because Peter also says believers are free people and servants of God. Christian freedom is freedom to bear faithful witness under Christ's lordship.

The order of 1 Peter 2:17 is pastorally important: honour everyone, love the family of believers, reverence God above all earthly authorities, and honour the emperor. Everyone receives honour because every person bears God's image. The Church receives covenant love. God alone receives ultimate reverence (fear of the Lord). The ruler receives honour, but not worship or final allegiance. This ordering helps pastors teach congregations to avoid both contempt for authority and idolatry of authority.

In public conversations, 1 Peter 2 calls believers to a posture that is neither silent nor abrasive. Christians honour officials best when they pray, tell the truth, seek peace, defend the vulnerable, and refuse to give any earthly power the reverence owed to God alone.

Biblical Freedom, Human Dignity, and Public Responsibility

Biblical freedom begins with human dignity. Men and women are created in the image of God, entrusted with work, creativity, relationship, speech, moral responsibility, and communion with their Creator. From the beginning, Adam is placed in the garden “to work it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15), showing that freedom is not aimless autonomy but responsible stewardship before God. Freedom is not the ability to do whatever one desires; detached from truth and righteousness, that kind of freedom becomes bondage to self, appetite, injustice, and the powers of this age. True freedom is the God-given capacity to live according to what is good: to love God and neighbour, tell the truth, protect the vulnerable, work with integrity, cultivate creation, form faithful communities, and use resources generously for the good of others.

This understanding of freedom also has public and political implications. Good laws cannot save the human heart, but laws rooted in moral reality can help restrain evil, protect conscience, defend the vulnerable, encourage honest work, preserve family and community life, and create conditions in which people may flourish. In this sense, biblical freedom is not opposed to law; it is opposed to slavery in all its forms: spiritual bondage, economic exploitation, coercion, corruption, racism, trafficking, addiction, and injustice. The moral shape reflected in the Ten Commandments—honouring God, protecting life, preserving covenant faithfulness, respecting property, telling the truth, and resisting covetousness—does not impose arbitrary limits on freedom; it guards the conditions that make freedom humane and sustainable.

This is why Scripture connects freedom to salvation. Christ frees people not only from guilt but from slavery to sin, fear, death, and self-centred life (John 8:31–36; Romans 6:15–23; Galatians 5:1, 13; 1 Peter 2:16). Societies flourish when freedom is understood not as limitless personal preference, but as moral responsibility ordered toward God, neighbour, dignity, justice, and the common good. Public life therefore matters to discipleship. Christians are called to defend space for conscience and worship, resist systems that enslave or degrade persons, and support laws and institutions that honour the image of God, protect the weak, reward honest labour, restrain evil, and enable generosity.

Additional Biblical Passages for Pastoral Discernment

- **Matthew 22:21** distinguishes what belongs to Caesar from what belongs to God; the state can never claim the whole person.
- **Philippians 3:20** locates the believer's primary citizenship in heaven, keeping earthly loyalties in their proper place.
- **Jeremiah 29:7** calls God's people to seek the welfare of the place where they live, even in exile.
- **Micah 6:8** names the moral posture of public faithfulness: justice, mercy, and humble walking with God.
- **Matthew 5:13–16** calls the Church to visible witness as salt and light, not domination.
- **Romans 12:9–21** frames public life through sincere love, hospitality, blessing enemies, refusing vengeance, and overcoming evil with good.
- **1 Timothy 2:1–4** calls the Church to pray for rulers so that peaceful conditions may support godliness, dignity, and gospel witness.
- **Ephesians 6:10–12** reminds believers that public tensions are not merely flesh-and-blood conflicts but reveal deeper struggles over fear, loyalty, truth, sacrifice, and hope.

Toward a Faithful Public Theology

Ultimate Allegiance, Public Responsibility, and Peaceable Courage

The biblical texts considered above develop one coherent argument: public life matters to discipleship, but no earthly authority may claim the Church's ultimate allegiance. Scripture calls believers to honour governing authorities, seek the welfare of their communities, defend the vulnerable, care for the poor, speak truthfully, and work for justice. At the same time, Scripture limits every earthly authority. Government may serve a real public purpose, but it is never ultimate. Christians may be responsible citizens, but they are first servants of Christ.

This distinction matters in a tense political moment. The Church should neither despise government nor treat it as a saviour. A healthy congregation learns to honour civil authority, critique injustice, pray for leaders, speak honestly, and resist any pressure to make nation, province, party, movement, or constitution the centre of its hope.

The gospel also creates a people whose unity is deeper than political identity. Christians may disagree strongly about Alberta's future, federalism, independence, or reform, but the body of Christ must not be treated as secondary to civic conclusions. Christian unity does not erase hard conversations; it requires that they be governed by truth, humility, patience, repentance, and love.

Biblical peace is not passivity, avoidance, or silence. It involves truth-telling, reconciliation, justice, mercy, forgiveness, protection of the vulnerable, and willingness to suffer rather than repay evil for evil. Pastors should help congregations avoid both false peace that refuses to name real concerns and false courage that mistakes anger for faithfulness.

Peaceful protest should not be treated merely as a problem of public order; it is also a test of whether government will listen, engage, and respond proportionately to citizens seeking to be heard. When large numbers of people gather peacefully and in good faith, Christians should ask not only what disruption the protest creates for neighbours, but also what responsibility leaders bear for any disruption caused by refusing meaningful dialogue or responding too quickly with coercive power.

In discussions of Alberta's future, this framework does not dictate a position on independence or constitutional change. It does require every position to be tested by the well-being of all people, care for the vulnerable, justice, truth, peaceable order, stewardship, conscience, and first allegiance to Christ. Pastors can help congregations distinguish principled civic engagement from resentment, fear, partisan loyalty, or excessive regional attachment, while also refusing to dismiss serious Alberta concerns as mere grievance.

Moral Courage, Peaceable Witness, and Protective Force

Pastors will serve congregations best by acknowledging that faithful Christians have not always agreed on how disciples of Jesus should respond when justice, public order, and protection of the vulnerable are at stake. Some Christians believe Jesus' way requires consistently nonviolent witness, even in suffering. Others believe legitimate public authority may sometimes need restrained force to protect the innocent and resist grave evil. This guide does not require churches to settle that debate; it does require the conversation to be shaped by Scripture, humility, love of neighbour, and first allegiance to King Jesus.

Romans 12 and Romans 13 must be held together. Romans 12 forbids personal vengeance and commands believers to overcome evil with good. Romans 13 recognizes civil authority's limited responsibility to restrain wrongdoing and preserve public order. Christians across the pacifist-just war spectrum may differ in application, but both should agree that violence must never be romanticized, vengeance must never be baptized, and government must never be treated as ultimate. The state is not "king government"; Jesus Christ alone is King.

Several biblical texts are often brought into this discussion. Genesis 14, Nehemiah 4, Esther 8-9, Proverbs 24:11-12, Psalm 82, and Isaiah 1:17 show that Scripture takes seriously the rescue of captives, defence of threatened communities, protection of the

vulnerable, and correction of oppression. These passages should not be used as simple permission for conflict, but they do remind the Church that mercy for the weak may require costly courage rather than passive concern.

The New Testament adds restraint. John the Baptist calls soldiers to integrity rather than exploitation. Jesus commends a centurion's faith, yet rebukes Peter's use of the sword in Gethsemane and teaches enemy love, peacemaking, and willingness to suffer. Paul appeals to lawful protection when his life is threatened, but he never presents coercion as the Church's means of advancing the gospel. Pastors should therefore help congregations distinguish the Church's spiritual mission, the state's limited public role, and the danger of using Christian language to sanctify anger.

Theological Synthesis for Pastoral Leadership

Taken together, these passages offer pastors a theological map for leading churches through public tension with conviction and charity. Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 call believers to honour governing authorities and live as responsible neighbours. Revelation 13 warns against political idolatry. Acts 5 teaches that obedience to God limits obedience to human authority. Romans 12, Matthew 5, Micah 6:8, and Ephesians 6:10–12 shape public witness through enemy love, justice, mercy, truthfulness, and spiritual discernment. The resulting posture is neither withdrawal nor domination, but faithful presence under Christ's lordship.

Pastoral guidance on Alberta's future should therefore avoid two errors: *political quietism*, which treats public life as irrelevant to discipleship, and *political absolutism*, which treats one outcome as the measure of faithfulness. A healthier path forms congregations that can honour government without worshiping it, critique injustice without hatred, and listen to Alberta's concerns without caricature.

Canadian unity can be a real and important good. Christians have reason to value peaceable order, shared responsibility, national solidarity, and the long history of common life among peoples and provinces. At the same time, national unity is not the highest Christian good. No country, province, constitution, or political arrangement may claim the allegiance that belongs only to Jesus Christ. Therefore, Christians should not bind conscience either to preserving Canada at all costs or to pursuing Alberta independence as the only faithful option.

Some Christians will argue that remaining within Canada is the better expression of neighbour-love, patience, reform, peace, and responsibility to the wider national community. Others will argue that Alberta independence may be a morally serious response if the present national arrangement increasingly works against gospel freedom, conscience, family, justice, truthful public speech, responsible stewardship, or the flourishing of local communities. Both arguments deserve to be heard in their strongest form rather than caricatured.

The pastoral task is not to assume that Canadian unity automatically represents Christian faithfulness, nor to assume that Alberta independence automatically represents courage, freedom, or renewal. The wiser task is to help believers test every option by Scripture, neighbour-love, stewardship, justice, freedom, peaceable order, care for the

vulnerable, and first allegiance to Christ. In practice, this means making room for Christians to love Canada deeply, seek reform patiently, or consider independence seriously, while refusing to let any civic conclusion become the measure of faithfulness in the body of Christ.

Christ-followers should therefore neither dismiss Alberta concerns as mere grievance nor treat Canadian unity as a sacred obligation beyond critique. They should also avoid making independence itself a test of faithfulness. The central pastoral question is allegiance. Christians may love their country, serve their province, honour civil authorities, work for reform, or advocate constitutional change, but they must never give “king government” what belongs only to King Jesus. Every public conversation should ask: What am I willing to sacrifice for? To whom is that sacrifice finally offered? Why am I willing to make it? Would my desired outcome serve Christ, my neighbour, the vulnerable, and the common good—or merely my tribe, comfort, fear, or anger?

Final pastoral thought: the Church’s responsibility in the Alberta independence conversation is to keep Christ first, form mature Christian discernment, protect unity without avoiding truth, represent both Canadian unity and Alberta independence fairly, speak into public life without becoming partisan, and help God’s people seek the good of their neighbours, families, province, and country.



4. Websites and Other Resources

The following websites are discernment resources, not endorsements. They offer civic, legal, public-policy, and Christian public-witness perspectives and should be used alongside Scripture, prayer, pastoral wisdom, and charitable conversation. Encourage readers to compare advocacy sources with official legal sources, distinguish reporting from opinion, and test every public claim by faithful Christian witness.

Alberta Independence and Sovereignty Discussion

- **Alberta Prosperity Project** — A non-partisan educational society presenting the case for Alberta sovereignty, legal process, federal-provincial concerns, and a democratic pathway for public discussion.
- **Let's Talk Alberta** — A grassroots initiative focused on town halls, community discussion, and helping Albertans ask questions about the province's future.
- **Stay Free Alberta** — A petition and advocacy-oriented site related to Alberta independence and the referendum process; useful for tracking movement updates but should be read as an advocacy source.

Christian Public Witness, Religious Freedom, and Common Good

- **4Alberta.org** — A collective of visionaries and believers, bringing truth to the forefront and educating the church and citizens to take action.
- **NLBCanada.ca** -- A Christian civic-engagement and public-witness resource that encourages believers to think biblically about national issues, religious freedom, public responsibility, and Canada's moral and spiritual direction. It appears to be advocacy-oriented, so it should be read for perspective and discernment rather than treated as an official or neutral source.
- **The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada** — A national evangelical resource for religious freedom, conscience rights, sanctity of life, family, care for the vulnerable, church engagement, and public-policy advocacy.
- **Cardus** — A non-partisan Canadian think tank producing research and dialogue on faith communities, family, work and economics, education, health, religious freedom, and the common good.
- **Cardus Faith Community Engagement** — A focused Cardus initiative supporting faith leaders, freedom of religion and conscience, and faithful presence in the public square.

Political Parties and Advocacy-Oriented Resources

These resources are included for awareness and discernment, not endorsement. Political parties and advocacy organizations should be read differently from official government sources, legal texts, academic research, or pastoral and theological resources. Pastors may find them useful for understanding arguments being made in the public square, but churches should avoid treating any party platform or advocacy campaign as equivalent to biblical authority.

- **Reforge Party** — <https://reforgeparty.ca/> — A federal political party associated with themes of faith, family, freedom, security, prosperity, and religious liberty.
- **Faytene TV** — <https://www.faytene.tv/> — Faith-based Canadian commentary on current events, civic engagement, and national issues from a biblical worldview.
- **ARPA Canada** — <https://arpacanada.ca/> — A Christian advocacy organization encouraging public engagement from a Reformed Christian perspective.
- **Christian Legal Fellowship** — <https://www.christianlegalfellowship.org/> — A national association of Christian lawyers and law students focused on religious freedom, justice, legal education, and public legal advocacy.
- **Canadian Centre for Christian Charities / CCCC** — <https://www.cccc.org/> — A national support organization for Christian charities, churches, and ministries, especially around governance, charity law, HR, finance, accreditation, and ministry resources.

Official Civic, Legal, and Policy Sources

- **Parliament of Canada LEGISinfo** — <https://www.parl.ca/legisinfo/> — The best starting point for checking federal bill text, status, readings, amendments, and legislative history.
- **Justice Laws Website** — <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/> — The official source for federal statutes and regulations, useful for verifying exact legal language.
- **Government of Canada MAiD information** — <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-services-benefits/medical-assistance-dying.html> — A baseline official source for current federal information about medical assistance in dying.
- **Statistics Canada** — <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/start> — A key source for demographic, economic, labour, family, social, and regional data.
- **Public Safety Canada** — <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/index-en.aspx> — A source for federal information on public safety, crime prevention, national security, emergency management, and related policy concerns.
- **Public Safety Canada — Human Trafficking** — <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/hmn-trffckng/index-en.aspx> — Federal information on human trafficking, prevention, resources, and national strategy.
- **FINTRAC** — <https://fintrac-canafe.canada.ca/intro-eng> — Canada's financial intelligence unit, useful for information related to money laundering and terrorist financing.

NOTE: This list is partially AI Generated and has not been verified for accuracy. Researcher is reminded to verify results for themselves.