

It is time for all Americans to speak on important issues

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by [Randy Bright](#)



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Being an architect that specializes in church design, it should surprise no one that one of the things I think most about is churches.

But I am not the typical church architect. The focus of my thoughts is not on the most recent developments in sound and [lighting equipment](#), getting my projects published to promote my practice, or going to church conventions to see what the latest trends are. There is nothing wrong with doing any of those things and this nation is blessed with many fine architects who design churches and do all of those things.

Though I am interested in many of the same things other architects are, my sense is that the real problems that architects should be addressing goes beyond the traditional roles that architects typically [play](#).

As much as I like conservative pundits who are tackling many of the most serious problems that we face, I find myself in disagreement with them when they suggest that, for example, actors who take on a cause after playing a movie role shouldn't be testifying before Congress as though they had become an expert just by playing the part.

I don't like it any more than any other conservative when liberal movie stars tell us things we know are not true, even when they earnestly believe what they are saying. But to suggest that any American should stick to their profession instead of expressing their opinion is just wrong.

This is why it is important for all Americans to speak out on issues that are exclusive of their own profession, and that is why I have been writing on issues here in the Tulsa Beacon that affect churches, even though the issues are not those that architects typically get involved with. The truth is that if certain issues are not addressed and certain authorities are not confronted, someday there will be no more churches left in America. It is important for architects to get involved, not so that there will be a market for them, but because churches and Christianity are important to America.

The prophet Haggai confronted the Jewish people with the fact that 15 years after their return to Jerusalem from captivity, they had not rebuilt the Temple. God said through Haggai, “Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins?” The Jews had neglected the Temple because they thought that building their own homes first was more important.

But they were paying a price. God went on to say, “Look at what is happening to you! You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!”

Wasn't he describing exactly what is happening today in America?

If we will spend more on rapid transit, people will be happier. If we spend more on building walkable cities, people will have a better quality of life. If we give more welfare [money](#) to the poor, we will become a wealthy nation again. If we will tax the wealthy more, there will be fewer poor people. If we plan our cities to be beautiful, people will enjoy the beauty and focus less on their problems. If we can get people to work together, we can solve all of our problems. If we can just get people to feel that they belong to a community, they will think less of themselves and more of others. If people can just learn to be tolerant of others, there will be peace, because after all, wars are fought over religion.

Can anyone tell me where any of this kind of utopia exists? Because beyond all of those “ifs” there is an expectation of no moral absolutes, and where there are no moral absolutes there are no moral constraints. By its nature, this utopia can't exist, it can only be imagined, no matter how much infrastructure we build or policies we create. Just as in Haggai's days, when we neglect God, we hurt ourselves, and that is exactly what is happening here.

I have heard it said from the pulpit and read it in other places, the church is in decline in America. It is not just that we are building fewer church buildings, it is because we are allowing the exclusion of God from our lives and our dialogue.

So I would suggest to other church architects that it is time to begin paying attention to what is being said and done in our communities, and challenge them and others not to be afraid to challenge the status quo. Churches are being excluded from communities, or if not excluded they are being given the back seat of the bus. It is a trend that can be reversed if enough people are willing to voice their opinions.

By the way, the book of Haggai has a happy ending. We can, too.

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