

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

P.O. BOX 750 › MADISON, WI 53701 › (608) 256-8900 › WWW.FFRF.ORG

December 14, 2022

SENT VIA EMAIL:

eoclass@irs.gov

Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20224

Re: Koinonia Christian Church Electioneering

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to report concerns of potential illegal political campaigning by Koinonia Christian Church, located at 2455 SE Green Oaks Blvd, Arlington, TX 76018. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 39,000 members across the country. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

According to a November 2022 report published by ProPublica and the Texas Tribune, Koinonia Christian Church Pastor Ronnie Goines explicitly endorsed Benita Reed as a candidate for the Mansfeld School Board during a service on May 7, 2022. Pastor Goines showed his congregation a mailer targeting Reed, and then directed his congregation to vote for her.

“All we got to do, people, is let’s go make a long line outside the polls and get this woman elected.”

“Koinonia, we need, Dr. Reed needs a thousand votes. She needs a thousand votes. We got right at 10,000 members.”¹

The Internal Revenue Code states that to retain their 501(c)(3) status an organization cannot “participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.”² Here, Pastor Goines in his role as the pastor of 501(c)(3) organization Koinonia Christian Church breached the responsibilities that come with his church’s tax exempt status. Pastor Goines endorsing a school board candidate and directing his congregation to vote for her is a violation of these regulations.

¹ Jessica Priest & Jeremy Schwartz, *These 20 Churches Supported Political Candidates. Experts Say they Violated Federal Law.*, ProPublica and the Texas Tribune (November 7, 2022), available at: <https://www.texastribune.org/2022/11/07/churches-list-violations-johnson-amendment/>.

² I.R.C. Sec. 501(c)(3)

Koinonia Christian Church appears to have improperly used its status as a religious organization and 501(c)(3) entity to intervene in political campaigning. Pastor Goines violated IRS regulations by endorsing Benita Reed, displaying a clear preference for one candidate over others.

We write to respectfully request that the IRS immediately investigate Koinonia Christian Church, and ensure that it is no longer receiving the benefits of 501(c)(3) status and that donations made to the church are no longer being treated as tax deductible. The IRS should take appropriate action to remedy any violations of 501(c)(3) regulations that occurred or which continue to occur.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kat D. Grant", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kat D. Grant

Equal Justice Works Fellow (sponsored by the Wm. Collins Kohler Foundation)

Freedom From Religion Foundation