

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: Sojourn 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 Sojourn Church, located at 4041 Marsh Ln, Carrollton, TX 75007. 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, Sojourn Church Senior Pastor Chris McRae implicitly endorsed Kevin Falconer as a candidate for Denton County Commissioner and Steve Babick for Mayor of Carrollton during his sermon on May 1, 2022.

During his sermon, Pastor McRea warned his congregation “that they were being lied to by an ‘invisible’ enemy’ about issues of race, gender, and abortion” and that they needed to “wake up and confront the lies.” He then invited Kevin Falconer to the pulpit to speak, saying: “I can’t, as my friends will say, I can’t endorse him. But I do know that god loves Falcons.”¹ Later in his sermon, McRae told his congregation that he believed Steve Babick would win the mayoral election to fill the vacancy left by Falconer.

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, while Pastor McRae claims he is not endorsing Falconer, the statement “but I do know that god loves Falcons” made during his sermon inherently implies to the congregation that Falconer is god’s preferred candidate. Bringing Falconer to speak to his congregation on specific political issues also indicates to the congregation that Falconer, and by extension Babick, are the church’s

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)

preferred candidates. Pastor McRae, in his role as the Senior Pastor of 501(c)(3) organization Sojourn Church is breaching the responsibilities that come with his church's tax exempt status.

Sojourn Church appears to have improperly used its status as a religious organization and 501(c)(3) entity to intervene in political campaigning. Pastor McRae violated IRS regulations by clearly indicating that Kevin Falconer and Steve Babick were the church's preferred candidates.

We write to respectfully request that the IRS immediately investigate Sojourn 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". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kat D. Grant

*Equal Justice Works Fellow (sponsored by the Wm. Collins Kohler Foundation)
Freedom From Religion Foundation*