

the Informer newsletter

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF PCAI CLERGY ASSOCIATION
(PARAGON CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE INT'L)
MARCH 2021

Thank You for the Prayers...

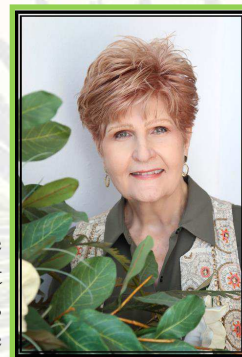
Dr. Elizabeth Foy / PCAI Executive Director

We, like so many last week, endured a horrendous weather event. While some parts of our beautiful nation are designed to sustain frigid temperatures and ice storms we are not. Our homes are built to circulate air and reduce heat and high humidity that we have most of the year. At the headquarter office we did all we could to prepare the facility but it is an old facility and there are large areas of exposure to bad weather. Several days of no water and no power gave us lots of encouragement for prayer.

We are grateful to inform you that the headquarter facility appears to have no damage to the plumbing. This is such a huge act of God. We have had winters when the temps would just dip a day or two below freezing and we would have a leaking pipe somewhere. But with temps in the teens for five days and ice packed solid several inches deep around the facility nothing broke. We appreciate the prayers you offered on our behalf. The ministry would have been halted in some areas without this protection.

People in many areas are still recovering from this artic-like blast. Don't stop the prayers now. Recovery will be ongoing over the next weeks. Financial hardships are everywhere due to the storm. Food lost because of no power, contaminated water because of pumping stations freezing, trees down across houses, and the list goes on and on. We know God is the source for every need but your prayers move the hand of God to act.

Times like these remind us why we are called "The Body." We are different parts but we are one. When one of us is going through difficulty all of us are affected. All of us are called into action to do what we can, when we can. The most powerful act is to pray because God can meet needs we would have never thought of. ♥



The INFORMER Newsletter is a free monthly publication of P.C.A.I. (Paragon Christian Alliance Int'l) & PCAI Clergy Association

2149 Highway 139, Monroe, LA 71203
1-866-268-5600 |
FAX (318) 345-0350

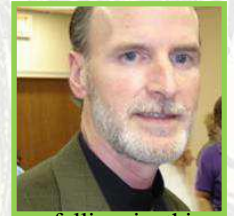
Website: www.paragonchristianalliance.org
EMAIL: info@paragonchristianalliance.org



OFFICE HOURS:
9:00AM to 4:00PM

Copyright © 2021

Taylor: Getting banned from social media is one thing. Don't get banned from heaven.



By Rev. Mike Taylor / Religion Columnist, Raphah Ministries Christian Center Director

There's a lot of talk today about being banned from social media. I want to remind everyone that getting banned from social media will cost you little but being banned from Heaven will cost you everything.

Much importance is given today to being politically correct, however I feel its far more important to be biblically correct; that is to say, trying to live a life that follows the commandments of the word of God.

In Matthew's gospel, the 7th chapter, Jesus is teaching His

disciples through many different parables. In Matthew 7 verses 22 and 23 Jesus says, "many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?" And then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

What a hard thing this would be for any of us. People who were doing work for God yet apparently with the wrong motives. He said to them "I never knew you."

In other words, these were people who spent little time building a relationship with God which is the main thing God desires. Jesus had the same problem with the religious leaders and Roman leaders of His day. They spent much time judging and wanting to stone everybody, yet rejected Jesus who was the Son of God though He was God in the flesh. The God man, the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Savior of the world.

Proverbs 16:18 says "pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a

fall." Many are falling in this hour but that should not make us feel good. Jesus said in Mark 8:36 "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses His own soul?" In other words, you could die a billionaire and still end up living in Hell for eternity.

I think about Joshua in the Bible and how some events occurred in his life are relevant to our times now. Joshua has replaced Moses and he is reminding the people of their history with

Continued of page 4

Tax Tips for 2021: What your needs to know when filling taxes this year!

SOURCE: Christian Laws Association Article



Are you handling Christmas gifts correctly?

- Cash gifts

For many churches, it's a common occurrence. Some pastors even refer to it as "crunchy handshake" - a loving member will give the pastor, or other church employee, a monetary gift to support him during the holidays. Sometimes the church itself will want to reward its hard-working pastors with a bonus. Both are wonderful and sweet gestures, but it's vital that your church be sure it is handled correctly at tax time.

In most cases, these gifts will represent taxable income and not a tax-free gift, and must be reported as income on the recipient's W-2. Please call our attorneys today if you have any questions about cash gifts received by church employees.

CAUTION: Cash gifts should not be given to volunteers. It may seem overly obvious, but any kind of monetary exchange for services means the volunteers are no longer volunteers, and can bring a host of additional laws into play.

- Noncash gifts

Not all gifts are money—sometimes it's a plump Christmas ham, other times it's a decorative birdhouse. Depending on the value of the item, these can still have tax ramifications, but not always. If the value of the gift is so small that it would be "administratively impracticable" to account for it, then it will be deemed a nontaxable "de minimis" fringe benefit. It is important to note that this exception does not apply to cash or cash equivalents like gift

cards, no matter how small the gift amount.

Does your ministry let employees use church-owned vehicles?

Earlier this year, the IRS released Notice 2021-7. This Notice set forth some temporary flexibility in how employee's personal use of cars owned by their employer—such as church-owned vehicles—are valued.

Essentially, this Notice would allow employers that use the automobile lease valuation rule for 2020 to, in certain circumstances, to switch to the vehicle cents-per-mile rule as of March 13, 2020. This can potentially affect the amount of taxable income reported on 2020 W-2s for employees that use a church vehicle partially for personal purposes. If you have

any questions about whether your ministry and employees could qualify for this, contact our attorneys or a CPA immediately for more information.

—TAX Q&A—

Are the stimulus payments taxable?

The short answer is NO - rebates are treated like a refundable tax credit, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, and are not considered taxable income.

What's the current standard deduction?

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act temporarily increased the standard deduction across the board - for 2020 it is \$24,800 for married individuals filing a joint return, \$18,650 for head-of-household, and \$12,400 for all others. This increase will only last until 2025

Continued of page 4

Tax Tips... continued from page 2

unless Congress takes specific action.

Does a minister's housing allowance count as payroll costs for purposes of a PPP Loan?

The short answer is YES - while our firm recommended ministries be cautious about accepting government money, if you did then the SBA has indeed stated that payroll costs include housing stipends or allowances subject to the \$100,000 annual compensation per employee limitation.

Is the ministerial housing allowance still valid? I heard it was challenged.

The short answer is YES - in a historic decision, a federal appeals court heard an attempt by an atheist group to find the ministerial housing allowance to be unconstitutional, a decision that would have had devastating impact on churches nationwide. Thankfully, the court rejected this challenge and its decision was not appealed.

Will the IRS clarify whether or not one of our church employees counts as a minister?

The short answer is NO - unfortunately the IRS has announced they will no longer issue private letter rulings regarding "whether an individual is a minister of the gospel for federal tax purposes."

Does my non-church religious organization have to provide contraception to employees when it violates our beliefs?

The short answer is NO - in a wonderful landmark ruling last year, the Supreme Court ruled that the Departments did have the legal authority to promulgate exemptions from the "contraceptive mandate" under the ACA for churches and non-church religious organizations.

If my church receives a tax bill, we can just ignore it right?

NO - there are often strict appeal deadlines that must be filed if your property is being erroneously taxed. DO NOT ignore any type of tax bill documentation you receive. Call our attorneys immediately.

If I'm being paid for religious work then I'm exempt from income tax, right?

NO - a man was taken to tax court last year for not paying income taxes or self-employment taxes for six years. He claimed he was "functioning as a church". The tax court shut him down - "No provision [in the tax code] exempts an individual functioning as a church from the obligation to pay tax... there is no exemption from the... income tax for income earned by individuals from religious activities."

Does our ministry really have to provide contribution receipts?

The short answer is YOU SHOULD - last year a tax court ruled that a couple's donations of \$15,000 over the year to charitable organizations were NOT valid as a deduction because they did not have contemporaneous written acknowledgements from the organizations.

Does our pastor really have to keep strict track of his mileage when doing church business?

The short answer is YES - a tax court denied a pastor's attempt to claim mileage deduction by noting that "there was insufficient evidence... as to the exact number of miles driven. [His] logs were inaccurate, they were not contemporaneous, and they lacked the specificity required..."

Highlights on Ministry

Hope for the Heart

Imagine waking up and everything you knew was suddenly unrecognizable. No memory of your friends, family or even your children remains. You are lost, confused, and very much alone. All your memories of a life you have built have been wiped away.

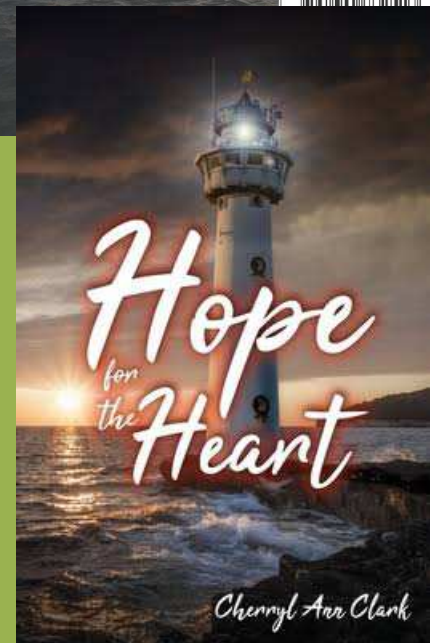
This is the story of one brave woman beginning her new life after a traumatic brain injury. Join her on this journey of discovering faith, love, adversity and victory through the unforeseen events of life.

**C H E R R Y L A N N C L A R K**

is an ordained minister who specializes in creating experiences that compel people to deepen their faith walk. Clark is the founder of Cheryl Clark Ministries and its signature event, the Proud Godly Woman Conference.

ISBN 9798600732513

90000



CONGRATULATIONS!!!
Cheryl Ann Clark, PCAI
Ordained Minister for her new
book released. You can buy it on
Amazon.

Taylor... continued from page 2

God and he is renewing the covenant with God. Many then like today were practicing idolatry. Idolatry is the worship of idols. We must only worship the one true living God. We can enjoy many things but only worship God. We should never worship idols.

The temptation to serve false gods is ever present in the day in which we live. God's covenant, God's Word clearly says when you disobey you are cursed. It can take a long time for a curse to land on us. Oftentimes God gives us the grace and mercy to repent. His desire for us is always to turn back to Him. His love for us is beyond measure. We should never take His grace for granted. We should get right with God while we can.

Joshua's words to the people of his day are just as important to us in our day. He said in effect you choose who you will serve and worship but me and my house we will serve the one true God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.♥

Photos on Church/Ministry Website-Learning from our Costly Mistake



By Ed Marino

How using images from Internet searches can lead to trouble.

My church received a letter claiming that we used an image on our website without a license and that we had to pay a fine of \$550. After some research, the claim appeared legitimate.

The image in question was one we had found with a Google search, and we assumed it was free to use. As it turns out, the image belongs to a stock image company. A third party contacted us on behalf of the company and threatened further action if we didn't pay the fine and remove the picture. We did, and the fine was reduced to \$300.

I did further research and discovered that stock image companies are really cracking down on people using their pictures on websites. One company has sent out thousands of letters like the one we received. Being small (or a church) doesn't elicit any sympathy.

I also learned that Google has a disclaimer that it doesn't need to reveal license information, and ignorance on the user's part is no excuse for unlicensed use of a picture.

The bottom line is that almost any use of a photo found on the Internet is a copyright violation. The rule of thumb is that if you didn't take the picture, you can't use it, unless you have the photographer's permission, which usually comes at a cost. In fact, there are even cases where photographers say they took the picture, but they stole it. You are still liable for the fine, unless you have a release from the photographer stating that he or she will take responsibility for any violations.

I also learned that deleting all the pictures from your website may not eliminate the risk, because there are services out there that archive websites. So someone may have an archive of what a website looked like yesterday or a year ago, and people can search it. If they find a picture they own, they can take action. □

Q&A: Is posting prayer lists an invasion of privacy?

Adapted from Using Social Media Safely

Some churches post “prayer lists” on their website that describe the prayer needs of identified members. These needs may include medical diagnoses, relational problems, or financial needs. Does the posting of this information on a church website constitute an invasion of privacy?

Possibly. A church can reduce if not eliminate this risk by obtaining consent from people before putting their names on the list. This can be done either by contacting persons directly and obtaining their written consent to having their name (and need) posted on the website prayer list or by instructing members to include this written consent at the time of prayer request submission if they desire for it to be shared publically online.

Some churches seek to avoid the inconvenience of obtaining the consent of every person on a prayer list by creating a “no prayer list” and notifying the congregation periodically (i.e., in church bulletins or newsletters) that persons who do not want the congregation to pray for them should contact the church office and have their names placed on the “no prayer list.” This “implied” consent is not as effective as the express consent obtained by contacting each person directly, and it is far from clear whether it would be deemed effective by a court.

It's possible that many have a similar question about emailing prayer lists. While that might not be as problematic as posting prayers online, I still think it would be wise to obtain consent before including someone on such a list. □

ANNOUNCEMENT

CHARTER RENEWAL DEADLINE

Charters under the PCAI 501(c) (3) Group Exemption have been mailed their annual renewal report packet. It is also available on our website at www.paragonchristianalliance.org, under “Resources” tab in a PDF file. It is important that your report be received in our office no later than



March 28th.

The reports and renewals are in compliance with the IRS code to maintain your charter's tax-exempt status under the PCAI Group Tax Exemption.