

June 2018

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Last December, we expressed our concern for “The Changing War on Religious Freedom.” We reviewed the history of religious freedom from the mid-20th century to now. We noted the work that strengthened the Free Exercise Clause after prayer and Bible reading had been removed from public schools. However, in more recent times, we have seen the changing of values and attitudes toward religious freedom and that has become our primary enemy.

But, while we are concerned with the changing times, we do see things that are encouraging. This month’s Educational Update talks about Faith Forums recently conducted by the Alabama Attorney General. The importance of these Forums was a state official reaching out to churches to include them as partners in areas where both the church and the state should be concerned, *viz.*, the opioid crisis, church security, and violent crime. This is quite different from the attempt of the Alabama Department of Education to regulate church schools (see, July 2014 Educational Update) and the Alabama Department of Human Resources to regulate church daycares (see, April 2018 Educational Update). Rather than reach out as partners, they reached out to control.

We also should take this opportunity to recognize the religion policies of President Donald Trump. Notwithstanding his several foibles, the resulting products are meritorious. On the National Day of Prayer, he set up the White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative, by executive order he created the Conscience and Religious Freedom Division of HHS and directed his Attorney General to provide a detailed analysis of the federal laws that protect religious freedom. These are along with executive orders recognizing the sanctity of life and other aspects of religious freedom. This is also encouraging as the federal government, under the Trump Administration, is reaching out to institutions and people of faith to cooperate with them in serving the needs of our culture.

Of course, all these things can change. We are thankful for these efforts by government officials. Please pray for those in authority over us. It is very important to our wellbeing, safety and security.

Yours very truly,

A. Eric Johnston