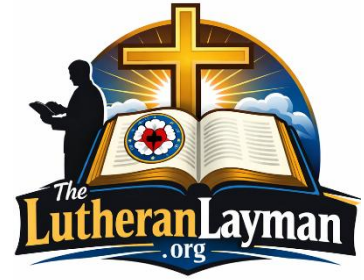


Christians, Civic Responsibility, and Voting

A Confessional Lutheran Bible Study



1. Understanding the two Kingdoms

Confessional Lutheran theology, which is based upon the Bible, distinguishes between **God's left-hand kingdom** (civil government, law, public order) and **God's right-hand kingdom** (the Gospel, forgiveness, salvation). Voting belongs entirely to the left-hand kingdom.

- Civil authority is described in **Romans 13** as God's instrument for restraining evil and promoting outward peace.
- The **Augsburg Confession XVI** explicitly teaches that Christians *should* participate in civic affairs, including voting, holding office, and making laws.
- Voting is therefore a legitimate and even commendable exercise of Christian responsibility

2. Voting as Part of the Christian's Responsibility for "Neighbor-Love"

The confessional Lutheran understanding of civic duty begins with the doctrine of vocation: God calls His people to serve their neighbors through ordinary earthly roles.

- **Romans 13** — Civil authority is "God's servant for your good." Participating in government through voting supports the very structure God uses to restrain evil.
- **1 Peter 2:13-14** — Christians are told to "be subject... to governors... sent by Him to punish those who do evil and praise those who do good." Voting helps place such leaders in office.
- **Augsburg Confession XVI** — Confessional Lutherans affirm that Christians *may and should* participate in civic affairs, including voting, holding office, and making laws.

Voting is therefore not a worldly distraction but a legitimate expression of Christian responsibility to our neighbors in the **left-hand kingdom**.

A) Voting as Neighbor-Love, not to advance the church's gospel mission.

Confessional Lutheran theology insists that civic engagement is not about advancing the church's mission but about loving one's neighbor.

- **Galatians 5:13-14** — "Through love serve one another... You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Voting is one way Christians serve their neighbors by promoting justice, safety, and stability.
- **Jeremiah 29:7** — "Seek the welfare of the city... for in its welfare you will find your welfare." Voting is a concrete way to seek the welfare of the community God has placed you in.

Voting is not about creating a Christian nation; it is about protecting the earthly conditions in which all neighbors can live in peace.

B) Voting Helps Preserve Outward Peace

The left-hand kingdom exists to maintain outward peace so the Gospel may be freely preached.

- **1 Timothy 2:1–2** — Paul urges prayers for rulers “that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life.” Voting is one of the means by which citizens help shape the leadership for whom they pray.
- **Proverbs 29:2** — “When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan.” Voting is a stewardship responsibility to promote leaders who uphold justice.

Confessional Lutherans do not vote to build Christ’s kingdom (“*My kingdom is not of this world*” – John 18:36), but to support the civil order God uses to preserve outward peace.

C) What Voting Is Not

Confessional Lutheran theology guards against political idolatry. Voting is **not**:

- A way to bring about Christ’s kingdom (John 18:36 — “My kingdom is not of this world.”)
- A measure of faith or righteousness (Ephesians 2:8–9 — salvation is not by works)
- A means of spiritual warfare (2 Corinthians 10:4 — our weapons are not of the flesh)

The church forms consciences; it does not endorse candidates or parties.

D) Evils That Affect our Neighbors

Confessional Lutherans oppose **biblically-defined evils**, not socially-driven biases. Our emphasis should focus on policies which **the Bible tells us** are harmful to our neighbors.

A. Injustice

Isaiah 1:17; Amos 5:24: Christians vote against policies that enable corruption or unequal treatment.

B. Violence and Lawlessness

Romans 13:4: Government restrains violence. Force, even lethal force (the sword) may be used to restrain evil, protect public safety, and maintain outward peace. Christians support policies that enable government to carry out its role.

C. Exploitation of the Vulnerable

Psalms 82:3–4: Christians oppose systems that prey on the weak.

D. Dishonesty and Corruption

Proverbs 29:4: Christians vote against policies that normalize deceit or abuse of authority.

E. Attacks on Religious Liberty

1 Timothy 2:1–2: Christians oppose measures that restrict worship or conscience.

F. Devaluation of Human Life

Psalms 139:13–16: Christians vote against policies that diminish the value of life.

G. Breakdown of Family

Genesis 2:24: Christians oppose policies that destabilize families.

H. Economic Oppression

James 5:1–6: Christians vote against systems that exploit workers or the poor.

I. Social Disorder

1 Corinthians 14:33: Christians oppose policies that erode civil peace and lawful order.

3. The Danger of Fixating on Personal Imperfections

Confessional Lutheran teaching recognizes that **all earthly rulers are sinners**, just as all citizens are. Scripture is blunt about this:

- **Romans 3:23** — “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
- **Psalms 146:3** — “Put not your trust in princes.”
- **Ecclesiastes 7:20** — “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.”

Because every leader is flawed, **voting cannot be a search for a sinless candidate**—that person does not exist. Confessional Lutheran theology warns against turning politics into a quest for moral perfection rather than a sober evaluation of policies that affect your neighbor.

A) Why Policies Matter More Than Personal Imperfections

The left-hand kingdom is governed by **law, justice, and outward order**, not by personal holiness. Leaders are evaluated by how their **policies** serve the common good:

- **Proverbs 29:4** — “By justice a king builds up the land.”
- **1 Timothy 2:1–2** — We pray for rulers so that “we may lead a peaceful & quiet life.”
- **Jeremiah 29:7** — Seek the welfare of the city.

Policies—not personalities—shape justice, peace, and the welfare of your community.

A leader’s personal flaws may be disappointing, but **their policies determine whether your neighbor is protected, whether the vulnerable are cared for, and whether the church can freely preach the Gospel.**

B) The Spiritual Danger of Personality-Driven Voting

Fixating on personalities (either their charms or imperfections) leads to several spiritual risks:

- **Misplaced trust** — Psalm 146:3 warns against trusting princes as saviors.
- **Political idolatry** — Elevating or demonizing leaders based on personality rather than vocation.
- **Neglect of neighbor-love** — When personality becomes the focus, the real impact on your neighbor is forgotten.
- **Confusion of the two kingdoms** — Expecting right-hand kingdom righteousness from left-hand kingdom rulers.

Confessional Lutheran theology keeps the focus on **vocation, policy, and neighbor-love**, not on personalities or charisma. Christians should evaluate leaders primarily by the policies that affect their neighbors, not by their charms or imperfections.

4. The Christian Posture While Voting

Scripture shapes the attitude with which Christians approach civic duty:

- **Humility** — Micah 6:8 (“walk humbly with your God”)
- **Charity toward opponents** — Matthew 5:44 (“love your enemies”)
- **Trust in God’s providence** — Psalm 46:10 (“Be still, and know that I am God”)

Voting is important, but never ultimate. Christ reigns regardless of election outcomes

Summary

From a confessional Lutheran perspective, voting is important because:

1. **It fulfills our responsibility to the left-hand kingdom** (Romans 13).
2. **It expresses neighbor-love** (Galatians 5:13–14).
3. **It supports the civil order God uses to preserve outward peace** (1 Timothy 2:1–2).

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