

Guidelines for Safely Handling Protestors

For Use by Faith-Based Organizations, Including Congregations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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PURPOSE

- To provide clear, respectful, and safe guidelines for handling protests or demonstrations that occur near or around religious gatherings, events, or properties.

1. PRIORITIZE SAFETY AND PEACE

- Ensure the physical safety of congregants, protestors, volunteers, and staff.
- Never engage in physical confrontation.
- Encourage calm, non-escalatory behavior among members.

2. ASSIGN A RESPONSE TEAM IN ADVANCE

- Designate a small group of trusted leaders or security personnel trained in de-escalation and conflict resolution.
- Brief the team on how to stay calm, communicate clearly, and avoid inflammatory behavior.

3. DO NOT ENGAGE IN ARGUMENTS

- Avoid debating or confronting protestors.
- If approached, listen respectfully but do not try to 'win' a discussion or defend the faith in that moment.
- Remember: silence can often be the most powerful and peaceful response.

4. SEPARATE WORSHIP FROM PROTEST

- Keep worship spaces peaceful and accessible.
- Guide members through alternate entrances if necessary.
- Do not allow protestors inside buildings unless legally required or safely permitted.

5. DOCUMENT BUT DO NOT HARASS

- If needed for legal or safety reasons, take photos or notes from a respectful distance.
- Never intimidate protestors with cameras or direct confrontation.
- Respect their right to demonstrate lawfully.

6. CONTACT AUTHORITIES WHEN APPROPRIATE

- Call local law enforcement if:
 - - Protestors become violent or disruptive.
 - - There is trespassing on private property.
 - - Emergency situations arise.
- Maintain a cooperative and non-hostile relationship with authorities.

7. COMMUNICATE WITH THE CONGREGATION

- Calmly inform attendees about the protest, especially if children or vulnerable individuals are present.
- Remind members not to retaliate or approach protestors.
- Emphasize the values of love, patience, and dignity.

8. PROVIDE A POST-EVENT DEBRIEF

- Gather the leadership team to review how the situation was handled.
- Document lessons learned and discuss potential changes to security or communication strategies.
- Offer pastoral support to anyone who felt threatened or shaken.

9. STAY TRUE TO GOSPEL PRINCIPLES

- Let Christlike love and humility guide every decision.
- Remember that protestors are people with deeply held beliefs—whether or not they align with ours.
- Our witness is often clearest in how we respond to conflict with compassion.