

How Should Church Leaders Respond to the Government Shutdown?

Shutdown of the U.S. government has elicited a spectrum of responses from **church** officials.

Temperate responses from oldline Protestant agencies and officials contrast with a declaration by Sojourners' Jim Wallis faulting "a clear hostility to government itself, government per se, from a group of political extremists that I believe is **unbiblical**."

Most church pronouncements on the **government shutdown** have been mild. Unitarian Universalists, Bread for the World, Oldline Protestants (United Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran, Presbyterian Church USA, Episcopal Church) and the Islamic Society of North America declared they are "opposing efforts to allow the will of the few to threaten the common good." But otherwise their statement is relatively benign.

Two United Methodist bishops have issued statements. Bishop Marcus Matthews of Washington, D.C. notes: "We are a nation that trusts in **God**." And he warns against "finger-pointing," while still aiming his own jibe against "efforts by a few to threaten the common good."

Indiana Bishop Mike Coyner pondered "The Government We Deserve." He notes: "All of the traits in Washington that we decry are actually an outgrowth of the messed-up values in our whole culture." He faults Americans' over spending, their "entitlement" attitude, and their "unruly behavior."

Coyner suggests the answer is to be "honest about the nature of human sin" and "confess that we all are the root of the problems we see in Washington," and "**pray** that God will

forgive us for choosing the government we deserve.”

Institute on Religion and Democracy President Mark Tooley says **church** leaders urging **prayers** for God’s help are faithful to their churchly vocation.

“Picking partisan sides, or portraying government as primarily a cornucopia of endless entitlements, is not,” he says. “Ideally, the **government shutdown** would motivate church thinkers more carefully to consider God’s vocation for the state, starting with Romans 13.”