

How We Respond to Cultural Events

As a church, how do we respond to cultural events (wars, shootings, political statements, controversies, etc.)? There are four principles that shape our approach.

1. Our primary aim is to shepherd people and pray

There are a variety of ways to “address” cultural events: acknowledge, pray, shepherd, make a statement, teach, call to action, and so on. While there are times to do all of these, our leadership’s primary aim is to shepherd people and pray.

2. The Sunday gathering is not the only place to address various topics.

Many events should be discussed and prayed about by our church, but that does not mean the Sunday gathering is always the ideal place to address every topic. In varying scenarios, a better context would perhaps be in a community group, a special prayer night, the Drop In, on social media, in the newsletter, or in informal conversations. It is important to remember that the focus of Sunday gatherings is the preaching of the Word, corporate worship, and receiving the Lord’s Supper.

3. God’s Word and God’s Spirit set the agenda, not mainstream news or social media trends

The danger of responding to every major headline is that it can allow whatever is trending in the media or making cultural waves to set the agenda for the church. We desire to have a proactive approach to prayer where God’s Word and God’s Spirit set the agenda. Within this framework, we can still respond to cultural events without letting them set the church agenda.

4. There is room to respond to cultural events, as discerned by the elders

Every cultural event raises a number of questions: Should we address it? If so, how? Where? And when? These decisions are not made reactively or by any one individual. Rather, the elders seek to discern together how best to shepherd the church through prayer, wisdom, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. While every situation is unique, the following questions help guide our discernment:

- Are members of our church carrying particular fear, grief, or pain that calls for pastoral care and prayer?

- Is this an issue that uniquely affects our congregation or our city?
- Is there danger of our people being led astray or deceived?
- What setting would best serve our people—a Sunday gathering, a community group, a prayer gathering, a pastoral conversation, or another context?
- Is now the right time, or will waiting in prayer allow us to respond with greater wisdom and clarity?
- Is it likely to be received in a way that is helpful, fruitful, and unifying?

Ultimately the elders discern what to address based on the above principles and through a process of prayer, wisdom, and guidance by the Spirit.

If anyone ever has questions, concerns, or needs care, the elders are available on Sundays or for pastoral care appointments (elders@realityla.com).