

Volume 1 | Issue 1
January 28, 2026

Religious Liberty Update

Quote

“Get in good trouble, necessary trouble”
-Rep. John Lewis in his own words

“Good Trouble”

The now deceased, and very honorable Georgia state Representative John Lewis once said in an interview about his days in the heart of the civil rights movement, about what he termed as “good trouble”.



“Good Trouble”

The now deceased, and very honorable Georgia state Representative John Lewis once said in an interview about his days in the heart of the civil rights movement, about what he termed as “good trouble”. What he meant was not to be a law-breaking troublemaker, but to realize that, sometimes when you have to take a stand for what is right, you may find yourself at odds with the laws of men who are not guided by the “better angels of their natures” as President Lincoln phrased it in his first inaugural address in 1861. Christians have known this since The Fall.

So, what exactly is “good trouble”? To understand that, it might help to take a look at what could be termed as “bad trouble”. Now, before you get on me for using a double negative in the previous sentence (my wife, Vanessa, is a retired teacher, so I already know I made a mistake), let me articulate what I’m driving at. In Genesis, God tells Adam (and through His Word, us): “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”-Gen. 2:17, K.J.V.

God is so gracious and longsuffering that He even repeats Himself: “But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die”.-Gen. 3:3, K.J.V. The rest, sadly, is well documented human history. Adam ate, then Eve ate, and they got into what could be termed “bad trouble”.

Now, the first incident of what could be termed as “good trouble is this: “And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”-Gen. 4:8, K.J.V. Abel brought the offering that God told him to bring, and Cain did not. True to sinful human form, Cain got jealous of his brother, got angry, and killed Abel. Interestingly, God actually tried to help Cain by giving him some pretty wise counsel in chapter 4, verse 7: “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?...”.

Religious Liberty, or what can also be termed as “Freedom of Conscience” can be a lot like the experience of Cain and Abel. You’re going along living your life; obeying God according to what you believe The Word has told you. You don’t tell anybody else how to live. In fact, you try to do like Jesus did (feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the downtrodden). Then, BOOM! Someone gets mad at you, or you lose your job, or you can’t even get a job simply because of who or the way you worship.

You would not think something like this would happen in the good old U.S.A., but it does. In fact, it has been happening for the 250 years that our country has been around! In some states in the southern U.S., some Sabbath keeping ministers were actually imprisoned for keeping the Sabbath, and perhaps working on the day then legislated to be what those states thought to be the Bible’s day of rest.

In more modern times, even those who keep another day holy in the way that we keep Sabbath, have run into problems similar to us. It seems that to truly obey God according to the dictates of our conscience does, indeed, get us into “good trouble”. Apparently some, thinking that they are doing God a “favor”, are trying to do what God has seen fit not to do: force the conscience to obey Him.

Hence, the need for a Religious Liberty Department. Our reason for being is twofold: 1. To help people who encounter religious related discrimination in employment, obtaining employment, housing, or any other needful thing. 2. To provide religious liberty, and any other freedom of conscience related information to our congregation and the public in general. We do this in a non-partisan, non-political way. God was neither Republican or Democratic, and neither are we. We do not tell people how to vote, how to worship (or even to worship at all), how to think or what to think, what to say or read, what bathroom to use, or even to obey the speed limit (although that last one wouldn't be a completely bad idea).

We do wholeheartedly agree with, and support the Seventh-day Adventist Declaration of Principles: "The God-given right of religious liberty is best exercised when church and state are separate.

Government is God's agency to protect individual rights and to conduct civil affairs; in exercising these responsibilities; officials are entitled to respect and cooperation.

Religious Liberty entails freedom of conscience to worship or not to worship; to profess, practice, and promulgate religious beliefs, or to change them. In exercising these rights, however, one must respect the equivalent rights of all others.

Attempts to unite church and state are opposed the interests of each, subversive of human rights, and potentially persecuting in character; to oppose union, lawfully and honorably, is not only the citizen's duty but the essence of the golden rule – to treat others as one wishes to be treated."