

Dear Colleagues,

This email is being sent to Conference Ministers and to National Ministries leaders and program staff with responsibilities in these areas. I would be grateful if it could also be included in the Conference Minister Basecamp.

Over the past two days I have received several emails letting me know there has been a change in the terms and conditions of federal grants. I know that some of our churches have received and relied upon HHS grants, FEMA grants, and other types of federal grants to support their ministries. I know that some churches are planning to apply for federal grants under the [Nonprofit Security Grant Program](#). Please encourage your churches to carefully review the terms and conditions of any federal grant they are choosing to apply for, with their own legal counsel. The [terms and conditions](#) for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program now require recipients and subrecipients of the funding, among other things, to cooperate with immigration officials, not engage in or promote programs that engage in DEI, DEIA, or “discriminatory equity ideology” within the meaning of the [Executive Order](#), in violation of anti-discrimination laws, and not participate in discriminatory prohibited boycotts relating to Israel. [HHS is also requiring certification of compliance with not engaging in DEI activity](#). The terms and conditions of ANY federal funding MUST be carefully examined to ensure that accepting a grant does make the church’s ministry an instrument of the state by dictating what religious activities the church can engage in and with whom the church can associate.

I cannot provide counsel to Local Churches on whether they should accept the terms and conditions of these grants, what will happen if they are accused of violating them, and whether First Amendment defenses exist; these are issues and risks churches should raise with their legal counsel.

The General Synod of the United Church of Christ, various settings of the UCC, and its predecessor denominations, have a rich heritage of promoting religious freedom and tolerance. Believing that churches are strengthened, not weakened, by the principle of the separation of church and state, the UCC has long acknowledged its responsibility to protect the right of all to believe and worship voluntarily as conscience dictates, and to oppose efforts to have government at any level support or promote the views of one faith community more than another. At its twentieth gathering, the General Synod continued this legacy by encouraging the involvement of the United Church of Christ in a national campaign to promote the principle of the separation of church and state and the proper role of religion in society. The UCC has a long history of advocating against the establishment of religion by the government, and has taken public positions supporting the separation of church and state, including positions that argue against churches being eligible for public funding, such as the position that it took in the amicus brief it joined in *Trinity Lutheran v. Comer*. Each church of the United Church of Christ can decide for itself whether to pursue funds from the government, and I encourage churches to carefully consider all of the implications when it is making these decisions.

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