Should American flags be in church sanctuaries?

By J. Brent Walker

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Even if it is not advisable to display the flag routinely in the worship center, there are other opportunities to show and celebrate the flag. Here are several ideas:

1. It is appropriate to display the flag, even in the sanctuary, on special occasions.

   These include the day of worship closest to the Fourth of July when we celebrate our country’s independence, religious freedom day when we express gratitude for the freedom we enjoy as Americans, and yes, even in times of national crisis and mourning. However, even then, the flag should be positioned in a way that does not signify equivalence with the Kingdom of God.

2. It is also fitting to display the American flag along with flags from other countries.

   The symbolism would signify unity with Christians throughout the world, appropriately displayed on World Communion Sunday, for example.

3. The flag can be displayed routinely in other parts of the church campus not devoted to the worship of God.

   This could include the fellowship hall, assembly rooms and other places where it can be seen and appreciated but where it does not threaten to displace the cross as the quintessential symbol of Christianity.

A healthy sense of patriotism is good. But we are Christians first and Americans second. When these words are used together, ‘Christian’ is the noun; ‘American’ the adjective.”

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