

## **LEGALITY OF CLERGY ORDINATIONS AND INDEPENDENT CHURCHES (LIKE OURS)**

Most US citizens are very accustomed to the government regulating most aspects of their personal lives: food, agriculture, all medicine, all healthcare, energy & power sources, vehicles, all transportation, traffic, alcohol, safety, banking, all finances and investments, international trade and travel, birth and death regulations, sales, labels (on everything), taxation, crime control, entertainment, all communication, all technology and even the news and media are all strictly regulated by our government. Therefore, it is strange and unsettling to most people that religious practices are not regulated by the government in the USA. They forget about the First Amendment.

In 1974, the United States government was sued by the Universal Life Church when the government challenged to their right to tax-exempt status. When the US District judge ruled on this case, he also addressed the question of mail-order ordination, independent church charters (like we have), and all church business. The Universal Life Church performed a great service to all non-traditional ministries by fighting this case in court and eventually winning.

The following is excerpted from the court's decision. The court addressed the issue of whether the ordination of ministers, granting of church charters are activities which do, or do not, further a religious purpose. The following is an excerpt from the court's final decision:

"Certainly the ordination of ministers and the chartering of churches are accepted activities of religious organizations... **Neither this Court, nor any branch of this Government, will consider the merits or fallacies of a religion.** Nor will the Court compare the beliefs, dogmas, and practices of a newly organized religion with those of an older, more established religion. Nor will the Court praise or condemn a religion, however excellent or fanatical or preposterous it may seem. **WERE THE COURT TO DO SO, IT WOULD IMPINGE UPON THE GUARANTEES OF THE FIRST AMENDMENT.**"

So under constitutional and federal law, our church, our policies, practices, and ordinations are completely legal and as valid as an ordination from any other church. No one has the authority to invalidate our church practices. If you'd like to read the complete case decision, it's filed in the **U.S. District Court, Eastern District of California, Civil No. S-1954.**

In North Carolina, the law strictly mandates separation of Church and State. This means the state government also has no jurisdiction, regulation or any power over any church business. Church govern themselves. Even so, NC government strongly prefers Corporation 508's (non-profit churches, like us) to have a standard set of By Laws on hand, but not filed with the court.

LEWA has these By Laws which are the private property and documents of LEWA. However, we freely allow them to be read and viewed upon anyone's request to our Pastor, Margo Ross  
Sears: [margo@networkthelight.net](mailto:margo@networkthelight.net).