

New Screwtape Letter Uncovered

by attorney Noel W. Sterett

My Dear Wormwood,

I heard the news that your patient won the local election. Great! He can now be of tremendous use to us, so don't miss this opportunity. Many in your position have failed to correct their patients' understanding of their role as a "public servant." Your patient needs to cherish the municipal budget and the land in the city like his own. Not in the sense that he should cherish them as if they were his, but rather because they are his. Train him to see himself as a gatekeeper to the community, a protector of public revenues, and a visionary. The health and welfare of the community depend on the faithful execution of his vision for the budget, for the downtown, etc. You see where I am going?

I hope you see why this is important in our battle against the Enemy and his followers. If not, let me explain. Our Father Below, from time immemorial, has fought the Enemy's efforts to provide land for his people. He knows how important it is for his followers to meet together and how vulnerable they are to our plans if we can keep them from doing so. Historically, our job was much easier when governments were not of the people, by the people, or for the people. When rex was lex, kings, caesars, and chieftains could freely and openly declare these assemblies illegal and not authorized on their land. Sure, some continued to meet illegally, but a good number stopped meeting and complied to avoid sanction, imprisonment, or death. Thankfully, there are still places that operate like this, though their numbers have declined since the Enemy began duping citizens into fighting for such silly things as the rule of law, private property, and certain "inalienable rights." In fact, these regressive ideas have had such an impact that governments everywhere are pressured to at least pay lip service to them.

Be not dismayed. This has simply required us to change our tactics. In a delightful irony, we've developed new tactics in the only nation to be established upon the regressive ideas I just mentioned. Our angle: zoning powers and land use laws. Sounds perfectly boring doesn't it? Don't overlook them. He who controls the land wins the war. You see, while it would be considered taboo or "unlawful" these days for your patient to simply tell the Enemy's followers that they can't assemble together, it is considered acceptable zoning practice to tell "assembly uses" where they can and can't locate. Yes, it is even lawful to expressly regulate where "religious" assemblies can and can't occur. Glorious! Let the games begin. I'm pleased to report that we've exported this playbook to leaders around the world who were looking for "legal" ways to stop the groups from meeting, growing, and undermining their governance. See, e.g. [China](#).

But why would your patient want to do that? Why would he care, you ask? Remember you'll be training him to see himself as the gatekeeper to the community, a protector of the public revenues, and the visionary who knows what the community needs on each corner. If your training is successful, it will be very easy to persuade him that the growth of an existing religious assembly or the approval of a new religious assembly in town is not in the best interest of the community—particularly the municipal budget. Help him think about other uses he would rather see at the property. Remind him often that religious assemblies just take property off the tax rolls. His constituents don't need traffic in their neighborhoods on Sunday mornings; the commercial districts must be preserved for sales tax generating uses; and do not let him give up on his dream of having a revitalized industrial park.

And if the zoning angle doesn't work? Well, we can talk about the new building code requirements at a later date—after you've proven yourself faithful with the little I've tasked you with today.

Your Affectionate Uncle,

Screwtape