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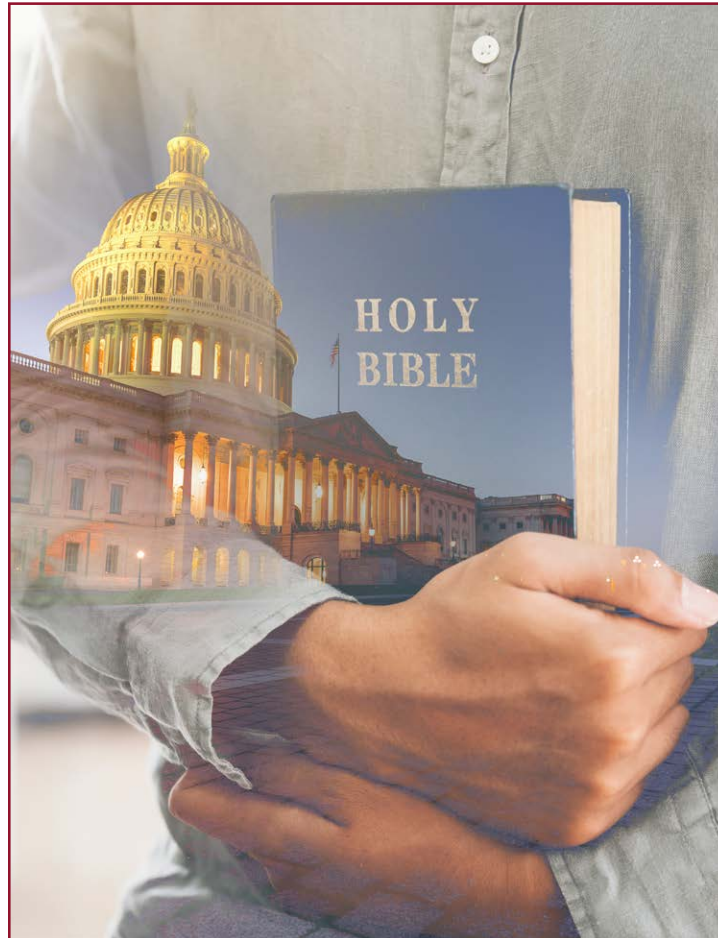


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FOCUSED ON THE WORD

Ministry Versus Political Activism



Since the mid-1970s Evangelicals have sought to re-enter the political arena in response to a morally declining America. Their sincere desires were to stop the erosion of our Christian heritage and return the nation to our former values. In this quest, perhaps inadvertently, well-meaning Evangelical leaders attempted to co-opt the Church into an organization of political activism.

This subtle attempt to change the primary, God-ordained purpose of the church from a soul-winning, disciple-making organism into a nation-saving, vote-making organization met with mixed results.

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

White House Cabinet and Governors: Wednesdays 8am (EST), light breakfast served

Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served

House Members: Thursdays 8am, Natural Resources, Longworth 1334, hot breakfast served

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Glenn Thompson PA
Tim Walberg MI
Randy Weber TX
Daniel Webster FL
Bruce Westerman AR
Roger Williams TX
Rob Wittman VA
Steve Womack AR
Rudy Yakym IN

The views expressed in each Bible Study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study sponsor.



PUBLIC SERVANT QUOTE

Greg Gianforte
Governor of Montana



“I’m deeply grateful to Capitol Ministries for their work to provide spiritual fellowship to those in public service around the world. In this fast-paced and divisive political environment, their weekly Bible studies serve as a place where we can step away from the fray and ground ourselves in the eternal truths of Scripture. It’s a rare opportunity to gather with fellow leaders as brothers and sisters in Christ to seek the wisdom that only God’s Word can provide.”

Since Capitol Ministries was born in 1996, one of our primary objectives has been to provide biblical clarity to this matter. Our ministry has always believed that it is much more efficient and effective for the sake of both the Church and the nation, for the Church to remain intent on its God-ordained soul-winning and disciple-making objectives. Our purpose has been to manufacture present and future political leaders—sending mature-in-Christ public servants into office and into government leadership! A mature-in-Christ public servant (an insider) can effect much more biblically-based change than can a member of the Church, inexperienced in the ways of the state (an outsider), who lobbies the state for change. In stating this intention, these objectives in no way imply any theocratic objective:

The Bible is clear regarding God’s desire in the new covenant that an institutional separation of Church from the state exist, but institutional separation does not imply influential separation.

Grown by the discipleship efforts of the Church, public servants are to serve the institution of the state with no eye for co-optation. (As a note for the sake of secularists who tend to assume that Christian public servants have a desire to make America into a theocracy, in over 20 years of working with Christians in office, Capitol Ministries Ministry Leaders have yet to meet one who harbors this motive.)

Read on, friend.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Bible clearly teaches that today there is to be an *institutional* separation of Church and state. To think otherwise is to believe in a theocratic or sacerdotal form of government. What the Bible does not teach—and what the secularist would like to say the constitution supports—is *influ-*

ential separation of Church and state. Clearly, however, such thinking is not supported in the Constitution or the Scriptures.

The state is dependent on godly leaders, but the state is not in the business of manufacturing them; that is the role of the Church.



When the Church concentrates its efforts on evangelizing and discipling officeholders, those officeholders who possess a Christian worldview are positioned to effect much change!

The emphasis of the historic Religious Right movement—attempting to redefine God’s mandate for the Church—is fundamentally flawed and, therefore, will always remain largely ineffective. We cannot expect the Church to be an effective, well-oiled political machine, but we can expect the Church to be an effective, well-oiled disciple-maker of those who serve the state.

II. A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Evangelicals attempted to reenter the political arena in the mid-1970s. But how is it that they ever left it in the first place—especially since their forefathers, the Puritans, were the very instruments and foundation upon which the state was conceived and implemented?

The Evangelical pullout occurred in the 1920s and 30s because the authority of God’s Word, the Bible, was under critical attack. How are these matters related?

In the late nineteenth century, America’s conservative Protestant seminaries experienced the incursion of theological higher criticism propagated by a seminary in Tübingen, Germany. Theologically speaking, German Higher Criticism seriously questioned the infallibility, inerrancy, and inspiration of the ancient manuscript evidences that comprise the basis of all Bible translations. Their criticism was

of the source documents that compose the ancient manuscript evidences used to translate the Bible into modern-day existing languages. Before Tübingen, throughout all of Church history, the matter of the integrity of the source documents of the Scriptures had never been on the table for debate.

In fact, during the Reformation in their great debate with the Council of Trent—as to whether salvation was by faith alone in Christ alone via God’s grace alone—both Luther and Calvin deemed the Scriptures as accurate, reliable, and authoritative for all matters of faith and practice.

**In 1930s America,
that all changed.**

Theologically speaking, German Higher Criticism entered the American Church, and many of the mainline Protestant denomination seminaries fell prey to the rationalistic thinking of the movement. In essence, the purveyors of what would later become known as Theological Liberalism held to a belief that God inspired not all of Scripture. Additionally, reinterpreted from the literal text of Scripture were man’s understanding of Jesus Christ and the Gospel. No longer was the kernel of the Gospel that man was sinful and in need of Jesus Christ as Savior, but in its place, Jesus had been reduced to being a good, humble role model—Someone Who portrayed a good lifestyle. Jesus was no longer salvific in their way of thinking, merely

VERSE OF THE WEEK

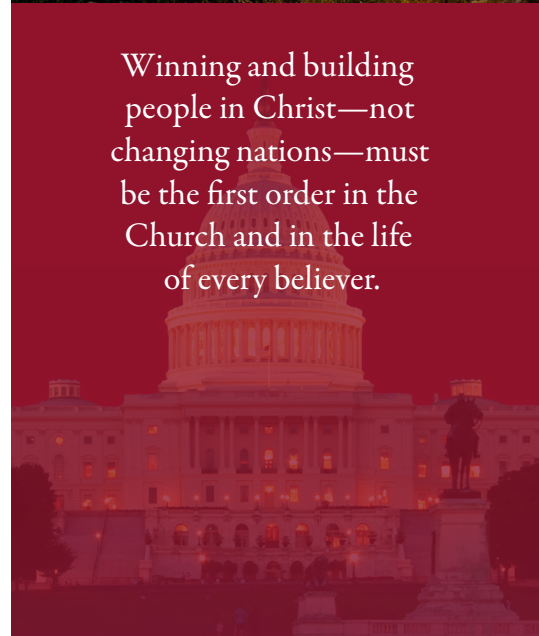


Philippians 1:18

*What then? Only that
in every way, whether
in pretense or in truth,
Christ is proclaimed;
and in this I rejoice.
Yes, and I will rejoice.*



Winning and building
people in Christ—not
changing nations—must
be the first order in the
Church and in the life
of every believer.





MINISTRY UPDATE

From Island to Island: Capitol Ministries Expands Across the Caribbean



Capitol Ministries is gaining momentum across the Caribbean as Ministry Leaders build relationships with public servants, establish Bible studies, and prepare for several new ministry launches.

During a recent worldwide Zoom meeting, **Caribbean Director Alberty Reyes** invited several



Ministry Leaders to share firsthand how God is opening doors in their nations. Capitol Ministries currently has leaders serving in eight Caribbean countries and territories, with opportunities developing throughout the region.

In Belize, **Pastor Scott Stirm** is already seeing remarkable receptivity among public servants.

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Ministry Versus Political Activism

One we should emulate, but nothing more. An accurate depiction, the retail name of Theological Liberalism was the Social Gospel, a movement that gutted the revealed Gospel of Scripture, which says, *But God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8).

The Gospel of the Scripture prior to the incursion of Theological Liberalism is intensely personal, driving the sinner toward repentance and the recognition of his desperate need of a Savior and Lord. Conversely, the Social Gospel became political, searching for sweeping answers for the betterment of mankind, *often through politically based means*. In theological circles, this chasm, which became known as the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy, would divide the Protestant Church in America and eventually throughout the world.

III. THE MANIFESTATION IN THE POLITICAL ARENA

The Fundamentalists, and their younger brothers known as Evangelicals, took great offense to the Modernist, Social Gospel movement because then, as now, it redefines the biblically explicit Person and work of Jesus Christ. A good way to discern the difference today is this: Fundamentalists have at their heart the primary task of defending the faith, while Evangelicals, to proclaim the Good News of Christ. Fundamentalists are certainly Gospel focused and evangelistic but tend to historically be those who adamantly fight against heresy more than do Evangelicals.

Responding to the defection of many mainline denominations, the Fundamentalists separated their fellowship from Theological Liberals. They left liberal churches, seminaries, colleges, and publishing houses. Later they would build new ones to recreate the vast infrastructure that conservative American Protestantism had enjoyed, the very engine that to this point had driven American culture.

In the meantime, the Social Gospel movement, in carrying out its unbiblical interpretation of Christ's mission, became, out of necessity, increasingly political. The movement became heavily involved in the political process in order to achieve its perception of mission. Accordingly, as we could imagine and to the point under discussion in this Bible study,

**As Fundamentalists
parted company with
theological liberalism,
they parted company with
American politics.**

This tragic result ended the historic, foundational involvement of Bible-teaching pastors often being the very men who held public office in the formative years of American history. The godly influence in American government soon evaporated and was replaced by a Social Gospel narrative.



IV. COMPARING THE METHODOLOGY OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL MOVEMENT TO THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

Fast-forward 40 years. Theologically speaking, the decade of 1970 would be titled the Evangelical Resurgence. Rather than cite examples of this revitalization, more important to the point is to juxtapose the huge, numeric groundswell in the Evangelical camp with the rapid moral decline in the nation. These parallel contrasting factors provide an acute realization as to why (what would later be titled) the Religious Right movement arose and moved posthaste back into the American political arena.

In the 1920s and 30s, out of sincere motives for separating for the sake of the purity of the Gospel message, Fundamentalists and Evangelicals had abandoned the arena of political involvement and civil influence. They were not about to commingle with a new, ill-informed “Christianity” that had invaded their space. The Social Gospellers invaded the political arena for reasons of missional necessity. As Theological Liberals gained ground, Theological Conservatives lost ground.

Then 40 years later, Fundamentalists and Evangelicals were fighting mad that the America they knew was in moral decline and dominated by Theological and Political Liberalism. The Evangelical Resurgence was now underway, and they hoped that reengaging and affecting the political arena “for Christ” would preserve a nation from its rapid moral disintegration.

As Evangelicals moved back into the political arena, they did so with a right understanding of biblical doctrine, especially concerning Christ and personal salvation. Their doctrine was biblical in comparison to the encroachment of Theological Liberalism some 50 years earlier. The unadulterated Gospel, encapsulated in the book of Romans, was at the heart of the Evangelical Resurgence: we are *dead in our transgressions* [but God] *made us alive together with Christ* (Ephesians 2:5). The purveyors of the Social Gospel had long ago abandoned this message.

Outstanding, however, in the zeal of the reentry of the Religious Right (which one might say, was the political arm of the Evangelical Resurgence) was the absence of a major biblical ingredient to any ministry endeavor that is desirous of God’s blessing. While Fundamentalists and Evangelicals have long held to the Gospel as defined and revealed by the Scriptures, their methodology for ministry—especially as it relates to their methodology in the political arena—was not informed by the Bible. In truth, the Bible is instructive regarding both.

**The religious right’s
message was right,
but their methodology
was wrong.**

One example of this right message among many is found in Philippians chapter 1, where Paul is writing near

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Stirm lives in Belmopan, the nation’s capital, and serves as vice president of the National Evangelical Association of Belize. He explained that Belize has an unusual level of formal cooperation between the government and the Christian community, including a senator who officially represents the church.



The greatest opportunity, however, is emerging through Bible studies being conducted inside government offices.

“What we found is that they are crying out for this, and they’re actually loving every minute of it,” Stirm said.

Pastors are now hosting Monday Bible studies in various government ministry offices, allowing public servants and their staffs to begin their workweek together in God’s Word.

In the Bahamas, **Pastor Gadville McDonald**

has developed extensive relationships with national political leaders.



McDonald, who has served in pastoral ministry for 20 years and previously led the country’s National Training Agency, said Capitol Ministries’ model provides an important opportunity to bring biblical truth directly to those serving in government.

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“Capitol Ministries provides just phenomenal opportunities for us to really engage our national leaders in a meaningful way for the Kingdom of God, as well as for overall life change,” he said.

Plans are underway for a ministry launch in 2027.

In Anguilla, **Dr. Ferdinand MacDonna** serves as chaplain of the House of Assembly and has worked with government leaders for decades.



MacDonna said churches from numerous traditions—including Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Charismatic, and Pentecostal congregations—are increasingly working together to reach the islands.

“There is a move of God in the islands,” he said, describing growing opportunities to work with political leaders and churches in Anguilla and Saint Martin.

Meanwhile, in the Dominican Republic, **Ministry Leader José Ramón Rodríguez** told the group that discovering Capitol Ministries gave direction to a burden he had already carried for reaching political leaders.



“Getting to know an organization that has as a goal to evangelize the political figures—it was a blessing for me,”

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the end of his ministry. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul gives the reader wonderful insights into biblically revealed ministry methodology. As Paul writes, he is physically chained to the Praetorian Guard, Caesar’s most elite protectors. This means if he was not in Caesar’s household, he was surely next door to it. Notice in verse 18 what Paul doesn’t say,

“I have finally arrived at the doorstep of the world’s political leaders. Now I will tell them what needs to change in the empire!”

What he does say is:

What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice.

The context of Paul’s remarks pertains to another subject, but the insight into his and our priority of ministry is refreshingly clear:

Winning and building people in Christ—not changing nations—must be the first order in the Church and in the life of every believer.

That was Paul’s clear priority, and it should be ours too:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the

name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19–20).

This passage is the Great Commission! Like Paul, the Church now is mandated to be about *making disciples!*

“*Seek first His kingdom,*” states Jesus in Matthew 6:33. After all, *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come* (2 Corinthians 5:17). If it is true that people’s lives change for the better when they come to Christ, then should not that transformation be the first priority of the institution of the Church and the individuals in the Church? Such was not the priority of the Church during the Evangelical Resurgence and Religious Right movement of the 1970s. Rather, the priority and methodology of Evangelicals was to attempt to transform the Church into a political activist organization and change the laws of America. But God calls His Church and His followers to change hearts—knowing that “good laws come from good hearts” (a loose translation of a quotation from William Penn).

V. THE CLARIFYING POINT

By employing worldly methodologies for political influence, the Church reduced itself to nothing more than a political pressure group—instead, biblically ordained by God, the Church is to proclaim freedom from trespasses and sin and proclaim new life in Christ! Bad politicians, political corruption, and ill-based laws all change



when people come to know the living Christ. This is the primary methodology of God's people. This biblically based priority, then, leads to evangelizing and discipling state leaders.

Send a mature believer into the public arena, and as an insider he or she will effect change to a much greater degree than will an outsider.

Unfortunately, because of a faulty methodology since the 1970s, the Church has been less than effective in its attempts to change the direction of America. It has broadcast its seed on soil as hard as a sidewalk. It should be no wonder that in its ill-fated attempt to morph its purpose, the Church has increasingly missed its calling and mission. And in becoming a political action group, the Church has vastly discounted its credibility.

VI. SUMMARY

The Church needs to be biblical in both its message and methodology. To muddle one is tragic (the Religious Right); to muddle both is catastroph-

ic (historic Theological Liberalism). Christians involved in the wrong message or methodology on earth render themselves useless and ineffective in God's eyes.

First Timothy 2:1–4 is an apt summary of this study. When believers prioritize praying evangelistically for and evangelizing *kings* and *all who are in authority*, God promises the following: *so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity* (v. 2).

Wise is the believing officeholder who commits himself to these biblically revealed purposes and priorities.

Maturing public servants in Christ is the most efficient way for the Church to change the direction of a nation.

The Church is at its best when it equips the insiders to do the changing. Mature believers in office are in a more powerful position to effect change than are believers on the outside. Disciple public servants today! God blesses men and women who act on clear, biblically based priorities.

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Rodríguez said through Reyes' translation.

Through his relationships with senators, congressmen, and other political figures, Rodríguez has already had numerous opportunities to share biblical truth personally. Another platform has been a television program he was asked to lead. Currently, Rodríguez is helping prepare for an October 14 launch inside a government building.

"Please pray for us as we continue also to boldly share the Gospel with the people in the political arena," he said.

Reyes also reported on developing opportunities in Saint Martin, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, and other Caribbean nations.

"We already have ministry in eight nations, so 20 to go," Reyes said.

With new launches approaching and additional Ministry Leaders being recruited, Capitol Ministries is steadily expanding its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ among political leaders throughout the Caribbean.



FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS

My Ways Are Not Your Ways

God says that He honors His Word (cf. Psalm 19 and 119). He also says that His Word does not return void (Isaiah 55:11). He also says that it is living and active (Hebrews 4:12). He also says that He uses it via His Bible teachers to mature His called-out ones (cf. Romans 10:15; Hebrews 12:2; Ephesians 4:12–13).

Combining all these Bible truths, is it far-fetched for the Church—as its foremost priority and responsibility—to send Bible teachers into the seats of civil Government in order to change civil government? Will not God draw His called-out ones into the seats of civil government in order to be matured in Christ through the Bible teacher?

Such is counter-intuitive to and transcendent of secular political science. But is this not the biblically revealed formula for changing a nation?



*Making Disciples
of Jesus Christ
in the Political Arena
Throughout the World*



Capitol Ministries[®] provides Bible studies, evangelism, and discipleship to political leaders. Founded in 1996, Capitol Ministries has started ongoing ministries in more than forty U.S. state capitols and dozens of foreign federal capitols.

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Albany NEW YORK • *Annapolis* MARYLAND • *Atlanta* GEORGIA • *Augusta* MAINE • *Austin* TEXAS • *Bismarck* NORTH DAKOTA • *Boise* IDAHO
Boston MASSACHUSETTS • *Denver* COLORADO • *Dover* DELAWARE • *Carson City* NEVADA • *Charleston* WEST VIRGINIA • *Cheyenne* WYOMING
Columbia SOUTH CAROLINA • *Columbus* OHIO • *Concord* NEW HAMPSHIRE • *Des Moines* IOWA • *Hartford* CONNECTICUT
Harrisburg PENNSYLVANIA • *Helena* MONTANA • *Honolulu* HAWAII • *Jefferson City* MISSOURI • *Juneau* ALASKA • *Lansing* MICHIGAN
Lincoln NEBRASKA • *Little Rock* ARKANSAS • *Madison* WISCONSIN • *Montgomery* ALABAMA • *Montpelier* VERMONT
Nashville TENNESSEE • *Oklahoma City* OKLAHOMA • *Olympia* WASHINGTON • *Phoenix* ARIZONA • *Providence* RHODE ISLAND
Raleigh NORTH CAROLINA • *Richmond* VIRGINIA • *Sacramento* CALIFORNIA • *Saint Paul* MINNESOTA • *Salem* OREGON
Santa Fe NEW MEXICO • *Springfield* ILLINOIS • *Topeka* KANSAS • *Trenton* NEW JERSEY

ESTABLISHED MINISTRIES: INTERNATIONAL

Brussels BELGIUM • *Porto Novo* BENIN • *Brasilia* BRAZIL • *Ouagadougou* BURKINA FASO • *Gitega* BURUNDI • *Yaounde* CAMEROON • *Manitoba* CANADA
Bangui CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC • *San Jose* COSTA RICA • *Yamoussoukro* COTE D'IVOIRE • *Kinshasa* DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
Quito ECUADOR • *Malabo* EQUATORIAL GUINEA • *Mbabane* ESWATINI • *Addis Ababa* ETHIOPIA • *Brussels* EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
Helsinki FINLAND • *Suva* FIJI • *Libreville* GABON • *Strasbourg* GERMANY • *Accra* GHANA • *Conakry* GUINEA • *Port-au-Prince* HAITI
Tegucigalpa HONDURAS • *New Delhi* INDIA • *Rome* ITALY • *Nairobi* KENYA • *Riga* LATVIA • *Monrovia* LIBERIA • *Vilnius* LITHUANIA
Antananarivo MADAGASCAR • *Lilongwe* MALAWI • *Mexico City* MEXICO • *Chisinau* MOLDOVA • *Maputo* MOZAMBIQUE • *Nauru* • *Kathmandu* NEPAL
Wellington NEW ZEALAND • *Abuja* NIGERIA • *Skopje* NORTH MACEDONIA • *Oslo* NORWAY • *Ngerulmud* PALAU • *Port Moresby* PAPUA NEW GUINEA
Warsaw POLAND • *Brazzaville* REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO • *Bucharest* ROMANIA • *Apia* SAMOA • *Edinburg* SCOTLAND • *Belgrade* SERBIA • *Freetown* SIERRA LEONE • *Bratislava* SLOVAKIA • *Honiara* SOLOMON ISLANDS • *Pretoria* SOUTH AFRICA • *Seoul* SOUTH KOREA
Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte SRI LANKA • *Bern* SWITZERLAND • *Papeete* TAHITI • *Dodoma* TANZANIA • *Nuku'alofa* TONGA • *Kyiv* UKRAINE
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