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Posted on Fri, Nov. 11, 2005

**STRAIGHT TO THE POINT**

## **IRS in the pulpit**

**N**obody likes to get an unfriendly letter from the IRS, but the pastor and congregation of All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, Calif., are wondering if they are being picked on. They have good reason to believe so. The IRS sent a letter warning that the church's tax-exempt status could be revoked if it engaged in politics.

The letter arrived after the church was featured in a Nov. 1, 2004, newspaper article that quoted from a guest pastor's sermon suggesting that Jesus Christ would be against preemptive war. Convinced that no politicking had occurred, the pastor sent the IRS copies of all church literature distributed before the election and all its policies.

The IRS was not persuaded. But it did offer a deal. Confess to wrongdoing and the issue would go away, the IRS said. The pastor said No -- and we applaud him for it. The IRS's actions seem overzealous, its tactics coercive, its methods chilling of free speech.

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