



# Pastors and Public Life: The Changing Face of American Protestant Clergy

*Corwin E. Smidt*

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## **Pastors and Public Life: The Changing Face of American Protestant Clergy** Corwin E. Smidt

America's clergy are not just religious leaders. Their influence extends far beyond church doors. Houses of worship stand at the center of American civic life—one of the few spheres in which relatively diverse individuals gather together regularly. And the moral authority granted to pastors means that they are uniquely positioned to play a role in public debates.

Based on data gathered through national surveys of clergy across four mainline Protestant (the Disciples of Christ; the Presbyterian Church, USA; the Reformed Church in America; and the United Methodist Church) and three evangelical Protestant denominations (the Assemblies of God; the Christian Reformed Church; and, the Southern Baptist Convention), *Pastors and Public Life* examines the changing sociological, theological, and political characteristics of American Protestant clergy over the past twenty-plus years. Smidt focuses on the relationship between clergy and politics—clergy positions on issues of American public policy, norms on what is appropriate for clergy to do politically, as well as the clergy's political cue-giving, their pronouncements on public policy, and political activism—and the impact these changes have on congregations and on American society as a whole.

*Pastors and Public Life* is the first book to systematically examine such changes and continuity over time. It will be invaluable to scholars, students, pastors, and churchgoers.

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