

## Religion and Separation in Lodi

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This Wednesday, the City of Lodi will be host to two rallies both with passionate causes. One aims to bring Jesus' name to City Council prayers. The other aims to replace invocation with a moment of silence.

Some are claiming this to be a conflict between atheists and believers. A closer look reveals that it is out-of-state Christian extremists tearing apart our city.

I would like to specifically address three deceptive lies that our visitors have perpetuated:

### Lie #1 - This is about atheists from Wisconsin

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While it is true that an organization, based in Wisconsin, authored letters to the City Council, their influence stops there.

Lodi United was founded by a Lodi resident of 14 years and has members from the greater Lodi area. None are from Wisconsin.

Lodi United is not just comprised of atheists. In fact, Lodi United is spreading the sentiment of Lodi's Catholics, Buddhists, Jews, and Muslims. Together, they want council meetings to be a place of equal respect.

### Lie #2 - There is a constitutional right to pray in Jesus' name

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Both sides of this debate have a number of references to site, but a clear decision has never been made. And even if there had, this is not a question about what the constitution says (or doesn't). Two hundred years ago, slavery was permitted and women could not vote. We live in a country where laws change.

This issue is not about law or policy or tradition. It is about a public meeting making people uncomfortable from the proselytizing of a specific religion.

### Lie #3 - Atheists have pledged to disrupt our rally

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This is the most disheartening comment of all. There has never been any indication of violence or disruption. In fact, Lodi United specifically chose a different start time for their rally to *avoid* disruption.

Even a non-believer can see the irony that a pastor fighting to pray in Jesus' name is using dishonesty to further his cause.

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## The Truth

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The individual leading the extremist cause, Mr. Klingenschmitt, has a history of hate, disobedience, and deception. I invite readers to use the internet and simply search his name. Read for yourselves what he has done, and ask yourselves if you wish to give him your support.

You will learn that he was removed from the Navy – not for praying in Jesus’ name, but for disobeying orders. You will learn that he has prayed, in Jesus’ name, for harm to come to others.

Many of our local, Lodi clergy have expressed that they want nothing to do with Mr. Klingenschmitt. Ask your religious leaders what their thoughts are on this individual.

## Lodi United’s Solution

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Today, meeting attendees who listen to an invocation can feel unwanted, uncomfortable, and even ashamed. They do not feel as if they are a part of our community.

Replacing the invocation period with a moment of silence allows all attendees a time to reflect, pray, and collect themselves without infringing on the beliefs of those around them.

Believers know that their god is a personal god, and a moment of silence to pray can be more powerful than any invocation – especially one of a different belief.

Attendees to City Council meetings will know that they are welcome to be there, regardless of their affiliation.

## Join Us

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We hope that believers and non-believers will come together this Wednesday and prevent the extremist ideals that could lead to separating our livable, lovable city.

Lodi United will rally at 5:15 in front of Carnegie Forum in a peaceful demonstration to show the City Council that our public meetings should be free of religion.

For more information about Lodi United, visit [LodiUnited.org](http://LodiUnited.org) or search Facebook for “Lodi United.”

Sincerely,

David Diskin, Lodi, CA