From: Jeff Beal
To: Preston Christie A
Subject: Regarding form 990
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I recently heard that the IRS is considering a policy change that would require churches and other religious organizations to report their finances to IRS, presumably to maintain their 501c3 status. I have been devoutly religious for much of my life, but recently lost my faith in religion, generally. Part of my disaffection with the church I belonged to was their complete lack of transparency around all things financial. Due to my lifelong faith, though, I am deeply sensitive to any risk of losing the religious freedom so important in our nation. I also recognize that the power to tax gives the government significant power to influence and control how organizations behave, and am concerned at potential conflict in this area.

So, I guess what I'm saying so far is, that it's complicated and I don't envy you the decision. Transparency, though, is a good principle, I think, and the government can do something here to help prevent people from being defrauded by charlatans claiming to be a church to take their money and build grandiose buildings and travel the world to "preach" rather than to do useful things with the money. I believe that we can find a way to increase transparency here without infringing on the religious liberties of churches.

-- Jeff