Twitter Thread by Chris Hutchinson

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I want to try to build on the excellent points made by @dpcassidyC3, @DavidAFrench, @Peter_Wehner & others about the need to disentangle the white, evangelical church from far right wing politics and its contribution to the insurrection.

I want to consider practical steps. 1/21

But first, a defense. Why the need to do this? And why address this, but not, say the BLM protests?

Because many of us are adjacent to these types of right wing Christians. These are our folk.

We may not have them in our congregations, but we know them. 2/

I don't know anyone in Antifa. I don't know anyone who lit buildings on fire this summer.

Of course arson is wrong, but my primary job is to care for our folk, not call out the sins of others (see I Cor 5:9-12). 3/

And we know the kinds of folks who went to the MAGA rally on Jan. 6th. If they are not in our churches, they are adjacent to our churches. Folks who promoted the patently false narratives about the election. 4/

They covered over the president's abuse of democratic norms and the rule of law. They chose to ignore many warning signs, going all the way back to 2015. 5/ https://t.co/U46SHqlq5f

Even if they did not promote violence or fly Confederate flags they repeatedly provided cover for those who did.

I tried to argue at first but realized we operated in different information realities. Many have pointed this out, but I did not know what to do about this. 6/

So what are some practical steps white, evangelical churches can take?

I don't think most of it cannot be done from the pulpit, not well. It's too easy to lose focus on the Gospel.

To replace grace with a new kind of correct, political thinking and activism. 7/

But a few things can be said from the pulpit, and even more importantly, a tone set.

So first, remain a simple church. A church of Word, Prayer & Sacrament. A church about Jesus.

One that has a ministry of place but emphasizes the worldwide & timeless communion of the saints 8/

That should provide some safeguards against nationalism and idolatry. It's not enough, but it can help.

Second, preach peace. Peace should be the default position of the Christian.

Teach the Sermon on the Mount as normative. Do not celebrate the American gun culture. 9/

Third, resist the attempts to co-opt your church as an appendage of a political party or one more cudgel in the culture war.

Eschew voter guides. Don't speak to some issues once/year (e.g. abortion) but not others (e.g. racism). Once again, see I Cor 5:9-12. 10/

If you do address public policy matters, say in a podcast, be careful not to parrot the talking points and phrases of one political party. Your folks can just as well hear that on Fox News or MSNBC. 11/

Then there are other things which are probably best done in Sunday Schools or Home Groups where there can be free discussion with give and take, and clarifying questions asked. Some suggestions. 12/

First, know and study our heritage. And I don't just mean the Reformation and Great Awakening (though that helps).

Know our recent history, where neo-evangelicalism came from, and how and why our denominations formed.

Admit our faults. 13/

Admit where we have allowed culture to influence us more than the New Testament. And not just the "crazies" of evangelicalism, but *us.*

Come to grips with the militarism, the nationalism, the sexism, and yes, often the racism that is part & parcel of our history. 14/

Read Marsden, Hatch, Noll, @kkdumez and @JemarTisby. I admit I have a of catching up to do. But study them *together.*

And when you study "worldview" issues, reject the simplistic "Christians know best about all subjects" approach from the 1980s that lingers with us still. 15/

That approach de-facto aligned conservative churches on one side of a whole array of public policy questions, despite the New Testament's manifest refusal to do so.

Maintain Christian freedom of members to come to their own conclusions on taxes, judges, etc. And mean it. 16/

Second (still in Sunday School), address head on the media consumption habits of your congregation.

Hold classes - with discussion - about what good and poor sources of news are and equip your members to know when they are being manipulated by bad actors. 17/

This will have to be done with a great deal of humility (we've all been duped sometimes) and patience. People will not be quick to give up their favorite websites.

But many also do not know that a bunch are simply propaganda sites - not straight news. 18/ https://t.co/xZaPMAB0Gr

And it is part of the church's job to carefully disciple our folks in this, once more allowing for Christian freedom.

If we don't do this, then disinformation and conspiracy theories will be given more room to grow in our congregations. Not from malevolence, but naivety. 19/

Finally, one last suggestion for now. Pastoral Care.

Don't let folks stay isolated. Check in on them. Make sure they are not becoming depressed or radicalized.

Let folks know they are loved.

Remember your duty to the community at large. Don't provide cover for any threats. 20/

Does all this fix the problem? No, of course not, and we cannot hold other churches (outside our own denominations) accountable.

But we all intermix and influence one another. So be an instrument of peace, seek the welfare of your city, showing honor and respect to all. 21/FIN

P.S. I meant to write that I am interested in the ideas others have on practical steps churches might take. We are all figuring this out together!