



Grace Baptist Church Statement on Religious Exemption to Mandatory Medical Procedures

The elders of Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Florida have produced the following documents to serve the members of our church as an increasing number are facing vaccine mandates at their places of employment. We have drawn on the wisdom of many others in this process and have particularly benefitted from the labors of other churches and elder bodies. Due to the unique responsibility to shepherd this particular flock in which the Lord has made us overseers we have written the following document with specific consideration to our context, confessional documents, and commitments as a church. We are happy to share the fruit of our work with others who might benefit from it and encourage them to use and/or adapt it for their own purposes with or without attribution—whatever serves them best. We view this document as the result of the collaborative efforts of many. Special thanks is due to Pastor Chad Vegas of Sovereign Grace Church in Bakersfield, California for sharing helpful insights from their elders. Pastor Graham Gunden of GBC, Cape Coral, did the bulk of the research and original drafting of this statement in behalf of all of the Grace elders.

The members of Grace Baptist Church stand within the two-thousand-year Christian tradition. We are committed to the doctrinal standards of our church constitution and the supremacy of the Holy Scriptures. Because of this, we affirm our religion's principles of liberty of conscience as expressed in our confession of faith, which is the Second London Confession of 1689 (see chapter 21, paragraph 2). We are committed to honoring and preserving human life from conception to natural death and teach that individuals and families bear full responsibility for making medical and healthcare decisions in the fear or the Lord. We also affirm that an individual's conscience is a gift from God and is answerable to Him alone who is Lord of the conscience.

Therefore, Scripture teaches that any act a person believes to be sin is in fact sin for that person, whether it is intrinsically sinful or not. "For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). Furthermore, our church confession states that, "subjection, in all things lawful commanded by them ought to be yielded by us to them, in the Lord." (2nd London Confession of 1689, Chapter 24, paragraph 3). Mandatory medical procedures do not conform to that which is lawful, i.e. that which conforms to the eternal law of God.

These mandates fall outside the jurisdiction of the divinely instituted authority of the state or employer. Therefore, individuals are under no moral obligation to comply with such mandates. Furthermore, these mandates fall outside the jurisdiction of the government according to the first amendment of our own constitution.

Therefore, we state our unequivocal support for the right to refuse, on the basis of religious conviction, mandatory medical procedures (including vaccinations), whether ordered by a branch of civil government, an employer, or any other institution to which an individual is subject or dependent. In addition, the Holy Scriptures teach Christians that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Stewardship of our bodies



before God necessitates being free to make decisions about health and medical treatments according to Scriptural principles, the light of nature, and the dictates of individual conscience. Therefore, the refusal to obey mandatory medical procedures may also be based on an individual's sincere belief that his or her (or his or her child's) life, health, welfare, or ethical integrity is potentially endangered by such procedures.

We affirm that our Christian religion protects the liberty of individuals and families to refuse any medical procedure or product on the basis of sincerely held concerns for known or unknown side effects, experimental or emergency uses, potential involvement in fetal cell lines whether in development or testing, or medical and/or political corruption or coercion. The sixth commandment—"You shall not murder"—makes every person responsible "to preserve our own life, and the life of others" and prohibits "the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor, unjustly, or whatsoever tendeth thereunto." (The Baptist Catechism, Q72-73.) Many Christians believe, in good faith, that involvement in such medical procedures violates this commandment.

Therefore, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we uphold the rights and responsibilities of the members of Grace Baptist Church to make responsible medical decisions for themselves and their families, including their right to refuse vaccinations or gene therapies on religious grounds. And we hereby call upon all authorities: political, governmental, organizational, or otherwise, to respect these deeply held religious convictions by upholding this religious liberty and/or providing religious exemptions as requested.

On Behalf of the Elders of Grace Baptist Church of Cape Coral,

Thomas Ascol, Senior Pastor



To Whom It May Concern:

The elders of Grace Baptist Church are writing on the behalf of _____, a member in good standing of our church since _____, to confirm that his/her sincerely held religious beliefs prevent him/her from receiving a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination. He/she is sincerely convinced that to take the vaccine would violate the law of God as found in the Holy Scriptures as well as in our church's Confession of Faith (Romans 14:23; Hebrews 11:6; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Second London Baptist Confession of Faith, 21.2; 24.3; The Baptist Catechism, Q 72-73). Our church teaches that to take any action one believes in conscience to be contrary to the law of God is to defy God's authority and is therefore not permissible. Our eldership affirms the right (and where applicable, the obligation) for each member of Grace Baptist Church to take religious exception to mandatory vaccination by governmental authorities and/or employers on this basis. Our church has also issued a statement confirming this right and obligation according to our doctrinal standards and Scripture.

_____ 's application for religious exemption is, therefore, not merely a matter of personal opinion or philosophy, but of bona fide religious conviction with the support of his/her church. Thank you for your understanding in this matter.

Sincerely,

Thomas Ascol