



Grace Church Austin Statement on Religious Exemption

Grace Church Austin believes that the only God, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in His infinite wisdom and kindness, has divinely instituted three primary spheres of human authority: 1) the home, 2) the church, and 3) the state. Each of these realms of authority have their purposes and their limitations. For example it is not in the authority of the Church to decide how much money citizens should pay in taxes, nor would it be biblical for the sphere of the home to decide what a Pastor should preach on Sunday morning (Matthew 22:20-22; Hebrews 13:17). In the same way, according to the King of all kings, the State is also limited in its authority (Romans 13:3-4; 1 Peter 2:13-14).

As the people of God, who submit to the Holy Scriptures, we believe that God alone has the right to set the limits, boundaries and jurisdictions for each of these spheres. In regards to the physical and medical well-being of individuals, we believe that this responsibility (as well as the corresponding authority) has been exclusively granted to the home, specifically the head of the household (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 6:1). In cases where there is no husband/father, that authority passes to the individual believer. While this is absolutely true, this does not mean that Christians do not utilize assistance, counsel, or expertise when it comes to fulfilling their responsibility to protect and cultivate the health of their family members (such as conferring with medical experts and physicians) (Proverbs 12:15). However, it is ultimately each Christian's God-given responsibility and God-given right to decide what medical substance is injected into their bodies and the bodies of their family members. (2 Corinthians 1:12)

In addition to this biblical conviction, we, believe that the Triune God who revealed Himself in His dealing with the people of Israel, and then most particularly in the coming of the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah, and today in the ministry of the Holy Spirit in His Church, made mankind in His image, and gave to man dominion over the world as His steward and representative (Genesis 1:26). In opposition to the assertions of secularism, we assert that human life has transcendent value because of this act of special creation on the part of God. Therefore, as God's creatures, we are called to live in accordance with God's laws (Psalm 19:7-11; Hebrews 8:10-11)

Human life begins at the moment of conception. Therefore we condemn as a blatant act of rebellion and murder the destruction of the lives of unique pre-born humans in the womb. The plague of abortion brings God's judgment upon any nation or people who would elevate their self-claimed sexual liberty above the value of human life as God has proclaimed and defined it. Therefore, we the people of Grace Church Austin cannot, with a clear conscience before God, participate in any medical means, including vaccines, that utilize the cells of unborn children in any capacity. To do so is to condone the atrocity of abortion, which is murder.

We believe and assert that a Christian's conscience can properly and validly submit to medical procedures, such as in the taking of tested and proven medications and vaccines, giving thanks

to God whose ordering of His creation has allowed such wondrous advancements. At the same time, we believe and assert that many sound bases may exist for a Christian to refuse certain treatments. These include treatments that lack a long-term safety history, have deleterious and dangerous side-effects, unknown impacts upon pre-existing medical conditions, or originate from fetal stem cell lines via abortion. Likewise, one may be convinced that the demanded procedure arises not from a public health concern, but from political machinations that are opposed to God's truth and ways, and therefore are to be resisted. We assert that the conscience cannot be coerced, and that all such attempts to do so are in opposition to divine truth.

Finally, Grace Church Austin also believes that while we are to preserve life, we are to do so in accordance with God's will. God's law provides for personal freedom and individual liberty of conscience. Christians are not permitted to live in constant fear of death, allowing this fear to cloud their discernment and faculties of reason. God has not given us a spirit of fear; he has commanded us to be sober-minded (2 Timothy 1:7).

The gospel has removed our fear of death and given us eternal life (Hebrews 2:14-15). Therefore, we assert in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ that the members of Grace Church Austin have the right and the responsibility to thoroughly research medical matters and to refuse experimentation and "mandatory" procedures, including vaccination, upon sound religious grounds. We expect all governmental agencies, businesses, schools, and employers of all kinds to respect these deeply held religious convictions, and to honor our religious liberty and freedom by granting religious exemptions as requested.

To Whom It May Concern:

The Pastor/Elder of Grace Church Austin is writing on the behalf of _____ to confirm that his/her sincerely held religious beliefs prevent him/her from receiving a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination. Our church, for ourselves and our congregants, affirms the right to take religious exemption against mandatory vaccination by governmental authorities and/or employers.

_____ 's application for religious exemption is, therefore, not merely a matter of personal opinion or preference, but of deep and sincere religious and biblical conviction with the support of his/her church. We appreciate your understanding and respect in this matter.

Sincerely,

Pastor Tawfiq Cotman-El: Grace Church Austin

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