



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on September 2, 2021

California, LA County Pay \$800K to Grace Community Church Over COVID Lawsuit

The statement from Los Angeles County's attorneys announcing its settlement with Pastor John MacArthur's Grace Community Church said nothing about the underlying issues. It only said it was withdrawing from the field of battle and paying MacArthur's church \$800,000 to please go away:



Andrey Maximenko/iStock/Getty Images Plus

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled [in February] that some public health safety measures could not apply to houses of worship, resolving this litigation is the responsible and appropriate thing to do.

When elders of Grace decided in July 2020 to reopen their church for indoor worship, they knew it would rouse the ire of LA County health officials who had banned such worship, using COVID as cover for their illegal and unconstitutional mandates. They prepared for the battle, issuing a statement that said:

While civil government is invested with divine authority to rule the state [no authority exists which] grants civic rulers jurisdiction over the church.

God has established three institutions within human society: the family, the state, and the church.

Each institution has a sphere of authority with jurisdictional limits that must be respected....

Government is specifically tasked with the oversight and protection of civic peace and well-being within the boundaries of a nation....

God has not granted civic rules authority over the doctrine, practice, or polity of the Church....

Government officials have no right to interfere in ecclesiastical matters in a way that undermines or disregards the God-given authority of pastors and elders.

Those government officials demanded under penalty of fines and imprisonment that church officials stop indoor services immediately.

The church ignored the demands and instead filed suit against those officials, claiming they were violating the church's rights to free speech and free exercise of religion under the First Amendment. The church also claimed it was being discriminated against, as those mandates weren't being applied equally to secular institutions and organizations.

Sure enough, a Los Angeles County Superior Court judge ruled in favor of those government officials.



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The church refused to follow that ruling, and in November, the county went to court.

The church's attorneys made the persuasive case to Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Mitchell Beckloff that the lower court's ruling couldn't be enforced until the constitutionality of those mandates had been decided.

And there matters stood until February, when the Supreme Court ruled that most (not all) of those mandates were indeed unconstitutional.

Jenna Ellis, the lead attorney helping Pastor MacArthur's church fight against the state, rejoiced:

We are very pleased to see Pastor MacArthur and Grace Community Church's First Amendment protections fully vindicated in this case.

It has been a hard-fought battle to preserve religious liberty and we hope that this result will encourage Californians, and all Americans, to continue to stand firm that church is essential.

Lacking further evidence in this case, Ellis' rejoicing appears to be premature. There was no ruling by a court that the state's officials were out of bounds constitutionally. There was no admission of guilt by those officials. There appears to be nothing in the record that resolves the conflict between church and state.

Both parties, given the ruling by the Supreme Court (half-hearted that it was), decided to withdraw from the contest, leaving the underlying issue unresolved.

Related articles:

[LA Times: Three Cases of COVID at Grace Community Church an "Outbreak"](#)

[Judge Rules Pastor MacArthur and Grace Community Church Are Entitled to Full Trial, Thus Delaying Fines, Imprisonment](#)

[California Megachurch Sues State Over COVID Mandates](#)



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