



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on May 26, 2021

## Newsom Must Pay \$1.35 Million to Harvest Rock Church

[In his final judgment](#) in the case *Harvest Rock Church v. Gavin Newsom*, U.S. District Judge Jesus G. Bernal ordered Newsom to pay the church's legal fees and related expenses, totaling \$1.35 million.

Of course, since the complaint charged Newsom with unconstitutional restrictions against California churches in his "official capacity" as governor, he won't pay a dime. The citizens of California will.

In November, California voters will likely remember this, along with a very long list of other grievances, when they vote to oust Newsom.



AP Images

More importantly, however, is what else the ruling accomplished. As Bernal wrote:

It is hereby **ORDERED** that Defendant, Gavin Newsom, in his official capacity as Governor of the State of California, all State officers, agents, employees, and all other persons in active concert or participation with him, are hereby permanently enjoined state-wide from issuing or enforcing regulations issued in connection with the COVID-19 State of Emergency declared on March 4.

Those regulations not only essentially shut down all worship services in the more than 3,000 churches serving the spiritual needs of Californians, but they extended through April — 13 months — and were only reduced upon direct orders of the Supreme Court in a separate lawsuit also brought by Harvest Rock.

In other words, Newsom acted unconstitutionally, and refused to withdraw his illegal actions until he was forced to do so by the court. He couldn't let go of the illegal power he assumed, using COVID-19 as cover.

Bernal's ruling extended to the potential issuance of "any new public health precautions on religious worship services and gatherings at places of worship ... and any restrictions or prohibitions [he might issue in the future] on the religious exercise of singing and chanting" during those worship services.

In a side note, Bernal said that his "order does not prohibit the State from issuing recommendations, best practices, precautions, or other measures, as long as such promulgations make clear to the public that they are voluntary and not enforceable." This is what Newsom, and every other power-hungry governor issuing similar mandates, should have done from the very beginning: giving the sovereign citizens the information they needed to make proper, reasonable, and personally responsible decisions on their own, without the threats of fines and imprisonment by their states.

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The pastor of Harvest Church, Reverend Ché Ahn, responded to the ruling:



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After nearly a yearlong battle defending our religious freedoms, our lawsuit has reached a permanent settlement in our favor.

I am thrilled to see the complete reversal of the last discriminatory restrictions against churches in California.

Reverend Ahn was referring to the original draconian shutdown of all church services in March 2020, which were modified slightly two months later, but then were put back on, extending through April 2021.

Mat Staver, the founder for Liberty Counsel, the non-profit law firm that represented Harvest Church, was far less charitable:

Governor Gavin Newsom's COVID restrictions discriminated against churches while providing preferential treatment to many secular businesses and gatherings. The Supreme Court intervened multiple times to provide relief.

Under the settlement, California may never again place discriminatory restrictions on churches and places of worship.

We are grateful for Pastor Ché Ahn, Harvest Rock Church, and Harvest International Ministry. Pastor Ahn's leadership and courage has toppled the tyranny and freed every pastor and church in California.

Added Staver: "What's important is [that] this ruling is permanent. He [Newsom] cannot ever do this again."

Staver must know that the battle for religious liberty is a continuous one, and that once Newsom is replaced there is likely to be another battle and another one after that brought by his replacement with the same mindset: Religious freedom is expendable in the face of public health threats, real or imagined.

For now, pastors of those 3,000 California churches may breathe easier in light of Judge Bernal's ruling. But they must remain vigilant lest they find themselves targeted again for worshipping God rather than the state.



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