



Judge Rules Pastor MacArthur and Grace Community Church Are Entitled to Full Trial, Thus Delaying Fines, Imprisonment

At a hearing on Thursday before Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Mitchell Beckloff, attorneys for Pastor John MacArthur's Grace Community Church [persuaded the judge](#) to delay implementation of fines and possible imprisonment of MacArthur for violating his previous ruling.

They successfully persuaded the judge that he got the cart before the horse. Before those fines and imprisonment could be implemented, the constitutionality of the rule the church and its pastor allegedly violated had to be determined first. And that would require a full trial.

The press release from the Thomas More Society whose attorneys have been defending the church against the Los Angeles health director's edicts explained:

[Our] attorneys argu[ed] that MacArthur and the Church are entitled to a full trial on the merits of their challenge to the constitutionality of the government shut-down orders and [Beckloff's] preliminary injunction.

Los Angeles County has sought to shut down the church and hold MacArthur in contempt, but [our] attorneys argued that a final determination on the constitutionality of [Los Angeles County's] orders must occur before the county could seek contempt against MacArthur for merely holding church....

Beckloff agreed that MacArthur and Grace Community Church are entitled to constitutional protections at [the] trial.

Thomas More attorney Jenna Ellis said, "This is significant because no person can or should be held in contempt of a constitutionally invalid order.... This case goes to the heart of what our founders designed for the purpose of legitimate government: not to be above the rule of law. Pastor MacArthur is simply holding church, which is clearly his constitutionally protected right."

Upon learning of the decision, Pastor MacArthur was relieved. Earlier he had suggested that if he were incarcerated he would consider it an opportunity to begin a jail ministry. Said MacArthur:

I'm very grateful to Judge Beckloff for providing full due process and recognizing the importance of these constitutional protections.... I'll continue to stand firm and we will continue to fight to protect religious freedom for the church.

It's ironic that the very edicts that MacArthur and his church are fighting are preventing that trial from being held promptly. The earliest the court can hear the case would be after the first of the year.

In the meantime MacArthur will continue to hold indoor in-person services. Back in August he expressed the wish that his strong stand against government overreach would generate more support: "I earnestly hope that our stance will encourage other pastors, churches, and the general public across



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on September 25, 2020

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