

5 Churches Get Six-Figure Settlement Over California COVID Restrictions

The Pacific Justice Institute (PJI) has announced it has secured a six-figure damage award for five California churches that were closed by Santa Clara County's COVID-19 public health orders.

The churches represented by PJI, in a joint effort with the Cannistraci Law Firm and McAllister Law Group, are Gateway City Church, the Home Church, the Spectrum Church, Orchard Community Church and Trinity Bible Church.

On February 26, 2021, the U.S. Supreme Court granted PJI's emergency writ of injunction in a 6-3 decision, allowing the churches to open their doors to hold indoor worship services. The Supreme Court agreed with PJI that the county's orders discriminated against churches by treating establishments such as grocery stores and airports more favorably.

After almost a year of negotiations, PJI reached a favorable settlement on behalf of the churches, successfully concluding their challenge of the county's health orders that had banned all indoor church services.

"PJI doesn't quit until justice is completely served, as evidenced by our unwavering challenge to the county's reprehensible health orders and our completion of a major financial settlement for the churches," Brad Dacus, founder and president of PJI said.

"This is a classic illustration of what Benjamin Franklin meant when he coined the phrase 'doing well by doing good.' PJI protected the religious rights of the churches, and this victory manifests in the churches' continued opportunities to

ensure that peoples' eternal destinies are secured – the best kind of remuneration," Dacus continued.

As CBN News has reported, California was one of the most aggressive states in the nation in terms of the restrictions placed upon its citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic. The state and several counties levied hefty fines against houses of worship for COVID violations.

One County Not Settling, Persists With Lawsuit

As CBN News reported last December, Santa Clara County is still defying the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling and is targeting a San Jose church and its pastor with massive fines for holding church services in 2020 during the pandemic.

Calvary Chapel and its pastor, Mike McClure, are facing \$2.8 million in fines for not shutting down the church's worship services and for allowing people to come to pray at their building in person after Gov. Gavin Newsom's ordered statewide church closures in 2020. {eoa}

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