

California Church Wins Major Legal Victory After State Drops \$67K in COVID Fines

California regulators have backed down from a major enforcement action against a Bay Area church and Christian school, dismissing all citations and fines issued during the height of the state's pandemic restrictions. The case really shows how contentious the relationship between government power and religious liberty remains.

As reported by The Christian Post, Calvary Chapel San Jose and its affiliated Calvary Christian Academy were hit with 15 citations totaling \$67,330 after state inspectors alleged children were not wearing masks in 2020. Cal/OSHA pursued a warrant to conduct further inspections, triggering a lengthy legal battle.

Attorneys with Advocates for Faith & Freedom challenged the warrant as unconstitutional, arguing that state officials relied on "a faulty affidavit" and lacked the specific factual basis required under the Fourth Amendment. The judge agreed, suppressing all evidence obtained during the inspections. Once the evidence collapsed, Cal/OSHA "ultimately withdrew all remaining citations," and confirmed there was "no finding of wrongdoing," according to the ministry's lawyers.



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The outcome is not a minor procedural win but a revealing reminder of how aggressively state agencies exercised authority over churches during the pandemic. Joel Oster, vice president and chief of trial litigation for Advocates for Faith & Freedom, declared, "This is a complete victory, not

only for Calvary Christian Academy, but for every church and Christian school in California.” He added, “The State tried to use OSHA as a weapon to intimidate a religious institution. They failed. And they were forced to walk away from their own claims.”

Attorney Nicolai Cocis emphasized that the ruling goes beyond paperwork and directly reinforces constitutional protections, stating the court “upheld the constitutional rights” of the ministry and exposed “the importance of due process and the protection of religious freedoms against unwarranted governmental overreach.”

This case is more than a local dispute. It is a preview of the environment religious institutions may face when the next large-scale crisis arrives. The machinery of state regulation has shown its willingness to move aggressively, and only diligent legal resistance kept these ministries from setting a precedent where compliance replaced conviction.

For now, the withdrawal of fines stands as a decisive ruling in favor of religious liberty. Whether it signals restraint or merely a pause before future confrontations is a question many Christian leaders already understand without needing to say aloud.

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a background in journalism from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of *The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man's Commentary* and a contributor to Charisma magazine.