

Maine Church Seeks Emergency Relief From Unconstitutional Restrictions

Liberty Counsel filed in the First Circuit Court of Appeals for an injunction pending appeal on behalf of Calvary Chapel of Bangor against Maine Governor Janet Mills.

The district court previously dismissed the case as moot following the governor lifting the restrictions on all capacity limits in public indoor venues on May 24. However, the governor could enact them again at any time for any reason. Therefore, Liberty Counsel continues to litigate in order to get a permanent injunction to permanently stop Gov. Mills from returning to her unconstitutional ways.

The district court's ruling runs contrary to every Supreme Court decision regarding COVID restrictions placed on churches and is also contrary to every other court decision on this issue in the country. The Supreme Court has already granted relief for churches at least 10 times, two of which involved Liberty Counsel's case of Harvest Rock Church and Harvest International Ministry. After the victory of the statewide permanent injunction on California Governor Newsom, the state is now required to pay \$ million in attorney's fees and costs.

After California's restriction were shot down, Maine had the most severe restrictions in the nation on places of worship with its 50-person numerical cap notwithstanding the size of the facility. However, Mills "allowed" churches to hold secular gatherings to feed, shelter and provide social services and counsel to an unlimited number of people without restrictions or threat of criminal sanctions. When Calvary Chapel of Bangor filed its lawsuit in May 2020, the governor's orders permitted no religious gatherings, including parking

lot services, and violations carried criminal penalties of up to six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

Ken Graves is the founding and senior pastor of Calvary Chapel of Bangor. The church also has the Calvary Residential Discipleship program, a biblically based ministry that helps men and women who are seeking a way of escape from drugs, alcohol and other life-controlling issues. The yearlong residential program operates two homes with 24 women and 24 men for a total of 48 full-time residents on the church property. CRD is a Christ-centered alternative to secular programs within the drug and alcohol community and includes a work program, daily Bible studies, devotional readings and prayer. Regular attendance at church services is paramount to this program.

Pastor Graves said, "Our Lord said, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.' We must not render to Caesar that which is God's. We have no Caesar! We the people are sovereign in our republic!"

Liberty Counsel founder and Chairman Mat Staver said, "Governor Janet Mills' COVID restrictions discriminated against churches and places of worship while providing preferential treatment to many secular businesses and gatherings. The same people could meet in the same church without numerical restrictions if the meeting was not religious or included worship. Yet, if the meeting was a religious gathering, then the restrictions applied. These unconstitutional restrictions were imposed from March 2020 until May 24, 2021. The courts must prevent Gov. Janet Mills from ever imposing these unconstitutional restrictions again. The Supreme Court intervened multiple times to provide relief. Just because she has lifted the restrictions does not mean she won't enact them again." {eo}

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