

San Francisco Threatens Pastors, Worshipers With Fines and Imprisonment

As you may recall, the city of Chicago launched a series of attacks against our clients, Elim Romanian Pentecostal Church and Logos Baptist Ministries. In one of the most shocking cases of anti-Christian tyranny we've yet seen, Chicago threatened "summary abatement" against the churches unless they stopped worshipping with more than 10 people.

"Summary Abatement," according to Illinois law, is notification that the city intends to seize and *destroy* property it deems to be a "nuisance." For continuing to preach the Word of God, the churches were declared a "public nuisance."

Liberty Counsel continues to fight for the churches' constitutional right to religious freedom. In fact, this month we are petitioning for a writ of *certiorari* asking the U.S. Supreme Court to hear our case.

Now, San Francisco follows Chicago.

On July 13, California banned *all* worship, including home Bible studies and fellowship. On Sept. 2, the City of San Francisco issued a chilling letter to Lighthouse Church—stop worshipping or face abatement.

The letter bans "live indoor services with congregants," stating only outdoor services are allowed "with no more than 12 people in attendance, total."

Outdoor worship in much of California is not possible with a record heat wave reaching 112 degrees and the smoke-filled air from raging forest fires.

The crime rate and the throngs of people sleeping and defecating on the streets demonstrate that San Francisco bureaucrats are the last people to trust to “protect the health and safety” of its citizens.

Instead of targeting the destructive rioters and their organizers, San Francisco has threatened prison and fines for the pastor and worshippers if Lighthouse Church continues to worship God indoors or with more than 12 attendees in the blistering heat and smoke-filled air outside. Here’s part of the city’s letter:

“Failure to comply with the Health Officer’s orders and directives is a misdemeanor punishable by fine, imprisonment or both. ... The Director of Public Health may cause the abatement and removal of the nuisance and the owner shall be indebted to the City for the costs, charges, and fees incurred by the City and County of San Francisco by reason of the abatement and removal of such nuisance. ... If you continue to fail to comply with the Health Order, you may be liable for other charges and costs, including, but not limited to, administrative costs, fines, attorneys’ fees and penalties.”

“Abatement” means the city and county can take any action to stop the “nuisance,” which includes permanently closing or destroying the building.

San Francisco has given up any pretense of obeying the Constitution. In 1947, the Supreme Court ruled that the state may not force anyone to stay away from church against their will. *Everson v. Board of Education*.

Apparently, the City of San Francisco does not care. In fact, like Chicago, San Francisco is so dead-set on stopping worship it threatened to seize and destroy—even bulldoze—church buildings in order to enforce the illegal, unconstitutional orders. And the city has the gall to insist they will charge the church for the city’s own unconstitutional destruction of

church property!

Liberty Counsel now has five federal court cases defending churches against the anti-God governors of California, Illinois, Kentucky, Virginia and Maine. We will be filing suit in another state shortly, and I will announce that as soon as I am able. In the meantime, our petition for certiorari in the Illinois battle means our case will be the first church-closure case in the nation ready to be heard by the Supreme Court.

The fight for our churches will be long and intense.

Concerning our petition to the Supreme Court, it could take months before our case is decided. In the meantime, as we have seen in San Francisco, lawless governors and bureaucrats will likely continue attempts to shutter churches and silence believers. We must push back. {eo}

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