

You're Not Going to Believe What Is Still Illegal a Full Year After COVID Shutdowns

It is still illegal every time Calvary Chapel of Bangor, Maine, meets for worship in the church. Early on, the pastor determined it is a sin for him to exclude people from worship.

It is still illegal for Calvary's Residential Discipleship to meet for Bible-based substance recovery sessions or for worship in Maine, although the same people can meet in the same church building so long as the gathering is not for religious training or worship.

Pastor Ken Graves, as well as the staff, churchgoers and discipleship ministry participants face criminal charges, fines and even potential imprisonment for assembling for worship.

It is still illegal for California rabbis and priests to chant for responsive readings (let alone sing), but angry protestors are allowed to chant without repercussions.

Meanwhile, Pastor Mike McClure's Calvary Chapel of San Jose, California, faces over \$3 million in fines (so far) for refusing to close his church.

It is still illegal for churchgoers to sing songs of worship in California, but the music, film and television industries are free to sing and chant under California Gov. Newsom's orders.

Pastor Ché Ahn of Harvest Rock Church and the 140 Harvest International Ministry churches of California have faced \$1,000 per day in fines and one year in jail for worship over the last year. Even though we struck down the total ban on

worship on Feb. 6, 2021, significant restrictions remain. That is why Pastor McClure's church is still fined every week.

It is still illegal for churches to meet with more than a small group of people in many states across America.

With God's grace, Liberty Counsel intends to free them all.

Do you know what else is still illegal? Restricting the church.

It is still illegal for any government entity to force a person to "remain away from church against his will" per the 1947 Supreme Court case of *Everson v. Board of Education of Ewing Township*.

It is still unconstitutional for the government to restrict the First Amendment right to religious freedom.

"Church" is far more than a podcast. I wish the politicians who are restricting churches could come with me to the church I visited this Easter:

- The River at Tampa Bay, where Dr. Rodney Howard-Browne was the first pastor in the U.S. arrested for holding church during COVID, is utterly amazing.

- The church has a college, vocational training, culinary school, soul-winning school, extensive missions, a hydroponic garden and a tilapia farm. It feeds 900 families free of charge who attend a service each week, has a riveting four-hour Sunday service and six nights a week has a four-hour outside evening worship service, which has continued nonstop for 298 days.

- This Easter, about 20 people gave testimonies, some from their mission trip to Honduras, some from the local soul-winning ministry and one from a man who recently gave his life to the Lord. In one week, this ministry led more than 2,000 people to the Lord! I'll be sharing more with you soon about

this incredible ministry.

Perhaps too many politicians are unfamiliar with churches that minister to the broken so they may be healed.

– Another of our amazing church clients, Calvary Chapel of Bangor, Maine, seeks out the broken, troubled and addicted to become a part of their year-long Residential Discipleship substance abuse program.

Perhaps too many overreaching governors and other out-of-control officials have only seen ritual or entertainment in churches they have experienced, or perhaps they know nothing at all about churches. Many think of “church” in very limited terms.

Just before writing this, I watched a disturbing video from a Polish Roman Catholic Church in London where the faithful were gathered for Good Friday. The borough police addressed the congregation from the lectern, demanding they cease their “illegal” meeting. Confused and shocked, the faithful left.

That is not going to happen in America on our watch—we continue to fight for freedom!

We have been defending churches against illegal and unconstitutional shutdown orders for a full year now. On Good Friday, I spoke with the California pastor whose church has been fined over \$3 million. On Easter evening, I spoke with a pastor from Hawaii who shared an extremely disturbing story I will share in another message.

Liberty Counsel continues to represent churches across the country, aggressively defending believers against the anti-church actions of their governors and other officials. Our Maine case is pending before the Supreme Court, and I will update you on that case as soon as possible.

Liberty Counsel, along with the pastors and churches we

represent, are firmly resolved to continue intensely fighting for religious freedom—yours as well as theirs! {eo}

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