

STATEMENT ON MASKING

Each individual issue that faces believers today carries specific factors that must be considered when trying to plot a wise course. In applying **the Guiding Biblical Principles**, the Leadership at Bay Area has tried to keep the following factors at the forefront when navigating the specific controversial issue of Masking Mandates.

Masking-Specific Factors to be considered:

- Covid-19 has proven itself to be a contagious and at times deadly virus which we would not presume to ignore.
- While the effectiveness of masks has been itself a deeply contentious issue, in the view of our local government, masks are an integral part of the Covid-mitigation response.
- It is our responsibility as a church to comply with local government standards for public safety (including fire safety, building codes, environmental regulations, speed limits, etc.).
- The mask mandate does not violate biblical principles.
- Regardless of our personal views on whether masking mandates represent governmental overreach, we feel we should comply with them *unless it can be demonstrated that they infringe on our ability to function biblically.*
- One helpful diagnostic for determining if a policy is infringing upon our free expression of religion and hindering our ability to function biblically is to ask, "*Does this policy have equally negative effects upon non-religious groups that are inclined to regularly gather in large groups (i.e., concert venues, etc.)?*"
- It is our view that the mask mandate does not unduly burden religious groups *in particular*, so while some may believe it is a constitutionally or legally questionable mandate, it is not an inherent threat to religious liberty.

Disclaimers:

- This should not be interpreted as naivete about the intentions of policymakers when it comes to free expression of religion in other legislation – it applies exclusively to our interpretation of masking mandates.
- Those who follow Christ and have interest in political policy are always encouraged to do careful research, contact their representatives, and use whatever legal recourse is available to citizens of the United States to influence policy.
- Bay Area Leadership continues to regularly monitor policies with an eye toward anticipating how legislation might impede our ability to honor God and fulfill the Great Commission.

At this time, the mandate to mask in social settings does not, in our view, rise to the level of hindering our biblical mission or teaching nor our function as a local church.

Therefore, we will follow the decision of our government authorities by complying with the mask mandate. We ask the church family, though recognizing differing personal opinions, to remain unified and not forsake our gathering together (Hebrews 10:25).