

High Point Baptist Church
Elders' COVID-19 Response

This document seeks to clarify the position of the elders of High Point Baptist Church regarding our response to the coronavirus pandemic. As in all matters, we appeal to the Scriptures as our ultimate authority to settle the issue.

1. God grants governing authority to His under-shepherds, not civic authorities.

We recognize that God has granted a sphere of authority to governments (Rom 13:1). As such, He has restricted their authority solely to civil concerns. They are “not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil” (Rom 13:3-4). God has *not* allowed them, therefore, to regulate the Church’s worship. “Christ, not Caesar, is head of His church,” and He delegates this authority to the church’s overseers/pastors/elders to govern the church (Matt 16:18-19; Eph 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2 Tim 3:18-4:2). In the case of the government regulating the worship of God, this is an act of evil and contrary to the Scriptures. When governments attempt to usurp the Church’s authority by ordering the assembly to worship a certain way, they are overstepping that God-ordained jurisdiction. Likewise, it is also evil and dangerous for church leaders to abdicate to civic rulers the authority given them by Christ. In fact, shepherds who do so have forsaken Christ’s calling for them, having given the bride of Christ to a foreigner (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23-27), and will incur severe judgment (Ez 34).

2. In matters of liberty, Christians should follow their conscience without impunity or guilt. However, the conscience must still be informed and governed by the Scriptures.

Since the government possesses no ecclesiastical authority, we, the Elders of High Point Baptist Church, have concluded that the church should *not* feel that they are under any obligation to obey governmental rules for worship. Any adherence to public health guidelines are voluntary and a matter of conscience, insofar that the conscience does not contradict the commands of Scripture. Those who wish to adhere to them are completely free to do so. Those who do not are likewise free to do so. We do not believe our position prolongs the pandemic or facilitates the spread of COVID-19. This includes but is not limited to wearing masks, “social distancing,” and vaccinations, and the elders will not allow those who wish to divide the church over disputable matters to do so. We desire everyone who attends High Point to feel free to exercise his or her conscience without fear of intimidation or coercion. We encourage our congregation to embrace one another in unity regardless of conscience, and we reject that adherence to public health guidelines are akin to “loving your neighbor,” or “being a good witness.” Notwithstanding the above statement, Christians must also recognize the importance that the conscience be biblically informed, anchored in truth, and carefully discerning, “not tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind,” and not “double-minded” (Eph 4:14; Jms 1:8). We are not to believe everything we hear, but are to test everything (1 Jn 4:1). Furthermore, we submit to the reality that Christ has called us to matters of obedience in the life of the church in a sin-cursed world, which will always have sin, disease, and death until the eternal state (Gen 3:14-19; Isa 43:18-9; Rev 21:5). The conscience cannot justify disobedience to these commands, “safer at home” has never been a biblical virtue for the healthy (Lev 13:46), and the sluggard exaggerates fear to insist his actions are justified (Prov 26:13-16). For these reasons, church leaders and congregations should take great care in considering how their actions further legitimizes peoples’ fears, justify the forsaking of the assembly, or disobedience to the “one anothers.”

3. Christians are commanded to obey Christ, and recognize that we are equally liable for sins of omission (things we are commanded to do that we do *not*) as we are sins of commission (things we are commanded *not* to do that we *do*).

God has commanded His people to physically assemble for His worship in Hebrews 10:25. We therefore urge all congregants to attend church in loving obedience, while also urging you to consider how the “one anothers” should guide your decisions and actions. These commands cannot be obeyed in isolation. They are commands for the physical gathering of God’s people (the only biblical meaning of the word “church”) and how we express “love for our neighbor” biblically (Matt 10:37; 19:29; 25:40; Lk 14:26). We are to:

- Love one another (Jn 13:34)
- Be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10)
- Honor one another above yourselves (Rom 12:10)
- Live in Harmony with one another (Rom 12:16)
- Build up one another (Rom 14:9)
- Accept one another (Rom 15:7)
- Admonish one another (Rom 15:14)
- Greet one another (Rom 16:16)
- Physically express kindness and love to one another (2 Cor 13:12)
- Care for one another (1 Cor 12:25)
- Serve one another (Gal 5:13)
- Bear one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2)
- Forgive one another (Eph 4:2)
- Be patient with one another (Eph 4:2)
- Speak the truth in love to one another (Eph 4:15)
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph 4:32)
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph 5:19)
- Submit to one another (Eph 5:21)
- Look to the interests of one another (Phil 2:4)
- Bear with one another (Col 3:13)
- Teach one another (Col 3:16)
- Comfort one another (1 Thess 4:18)
- Encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11)
- Exhort one another (Hebrews 3:13)
- Stir up one another to love and good works (Heb 10:24)
- Show hospitality to one another (1 Pet 4:9)
- Employ the gifts God has given us for the benefit of one another (1 Pet 4:10)
- Clothe ourselves with humility towards one another (1 Pet 5:5)
- Pray for one another (Jms 5:16)
- Confess our faults to one another (Jms 5:16)

It is our sincere prayer that our congregation will hold to these commands to grow in love, unity, and sanctification with one another.

Sincerely and in Christ,

High Point Baptist Church Elders