

## **Response of EMC churches towards Civil Government on the restrictions based on the pandemic response**

### **EMCC Articles of Faith and Practice 2.9. Attitude Toward Civil Government**

The EMCC Articles of Faith and Practice are agreed upon statements that govern the way our family of churches believe and behave in our world. Our statement on “Attitudes Towards Civil Government” guides our response to those in authority over us. What follows is a commentary on those guiding statements that I trust will help bring focus to our responses to the issues of our day.

**“Civil government is ordained of God for the welfare of society to promote and protect the good and to restrain and punish evil.”** Dan. 4:17; Rom. 13:1-5

As followers of Jesus, we yield to the lordship of Jesus and to His Word. The scripture are clear when they instruct us to submit ourselves to the governing authorities, which have been established by God Himself. If we rebel against the authorities, we are rebelling against what God has instituted.

**“Therefore, we consider it the duty of Christians to pray for rulers and for those who are in authority over them and to give due loyalty, respect, and obedience to them.”** 1 Tim. 2:1-4

We are instructed to pray for those in authority. This is not a command from our governing authorities, but from The King of Kings. He has established all authorities on earth in their place at their given times for His sovereign purposes. As such, we follow through on this command because we are citizens of heaven first and foremost. We live by the principles of the Kingdom of God, which form the basis of our responses to all changes and circumstances of life. This includes our response to government restrictions that are in place for such a time as this. Kingdom values and motives are what give us stability as we maintain a bold bearing in turbulent times.

We also know that it is the posture of Jesus in us, that helps form and shape our attitudes, behaviors and character as we move through our neighborhoods as salt, light and leaven of the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**“Christians are also encouraged to take an active interest in government at all levels. Where the demands of civil law would militate against the supreme law and will of God, Christians should obey God rather than man.”** Acts 4:13-20; 5:27,28

There are a few examples in scripture where we are instructed to obey God rather than man:

- (1) Like when we are commanded by our governing authorities on earth to worship another God rather than the one true God - like Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar
- (2) Like when we are commanded by governing authorities to stop speaking and teaching in Jesus’ name, as in the case of the disciples and the religious leaders of their day.

These examples are about the **message** – i.e. ‘speaking and teaching in Jesus name.’  
These examples are not about the **method** – i.e. traditions, practices and programs of how we gather on a Sunday morning, or ‘do church’ throughout the week.

The church has always been more than just a service on Sunday morning. The current climate caused by a pandemic is forcing us to think more clearly about this fact. We have been forced to think more creatively about how we bring balance to the church gathered and scattered.

Sunday morning is not enough to bring about the disciple-making movement that Jesus invites us into. The New Testament writers constantly remind us to be about intentional, relational, disciple-making practices in the spaces of the ‘temple courts, and from house to house’ (Acts 5:42). ‘We are never stop teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ,’ as well as bring daily encouragement as long as it is called ‘today’ (Hebrews 3:12-14).

However, what the last 12 months has taught us is that, as Bobby Harrington of Discipleship.org says, “we are too dependent on Sundays, we are not focused enough on making disciples, we are too enmeshed in politics, far too many of us are experiencing regular anger and we need help discussing difficult cultural issues.”

What we have been challenged with through this last year, is to ‘keep the main thing, the main thing! That ‘main thing’ is to continue our focus on the Great Commission fueled by the Great Commandment. Disciple-making is at the core of who we are and what we do. The DNA of the follower of Jesus is the ‘Spirit-filled,’ Spirit-led’ life. It is the life of Jesus in us, that helps us stay on point as we maintain unity in the body of Christ and to bring the message of ‘Hope’ to a very hurting world.

Here are a few sample questions to consider in discussions with your leadership team and congregants:

1. What is the main thing we should be focussing at this time?
2. What impact does not gathering have on our ability to share the gospel?
3. What are other ways that we can gather?
4. What disciple-making practices work better than others, in times of restricted in-person gathering?