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conscience of  
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## Adventist Church Issues COVID-19 Vaccination Statement

The world headquarters for the Seventh-day Adventist Church has addressed COVID-19 Pfizer and Moderna vaccinations. *Waymarks* is sharing highlights, but the entire statement as well as the Church's stance on vaccinations can be found on the General Conference website. You are encouraged to read further: <https://adventist.news/en/news/covid-19-vaccines-addressing-concerns-offering-counsel>.

Following are quoted excerpts about important concerns or questions raised by members:

- **Mrs. White's Experience:** Ellen White modeled practical prevention in the face of the lethal disease in her era, smallpox, and took the immunization herself, as did those close to her.

- **Mark of the Beast:** One recent view, propagated through social media and some internet websites, has put forward the theory that the upcoming vaccines produced to combat COVID-19 belong to a process of control that

will lead to the application of the mark of the beast. It should be noted, however, that Adventists hold to the conviction that the end-time controversy will center on the law of God, and particularly on the fourth commandment (Rev 14:12). Moreover, the third angel's message will warn against the reception of the mark (Rev 14:9-11) and will enlighten humankind as to the issues involved. For this reason, it should be made clear that Seventh-day Adventists understand the "mark of the beast" to be not a literal mark, but a sign of allegiance that identifies the bearer as loyal to the power represented by the beast.

- **Animal Products:** It should be clarified that the abiding biblical instructions forbidding the consumption of unclean food and blood (Lev 11:1-20; 17:11-12; Acts 15:20) do not apply to vaccines for the obvious reason that vac-

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# Past, Present Administrations Make Religious Liberty Changes

In the last week of the Trump administration, the Department of Health and Human Services finalized allowing social-service providers that receive government funds to discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It could affect agencies that work with adoption, elder care, foster parenting, homelessness, and other services to the public.

HHS said that the discriminations restrictions made during the Obama era violate the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. "...the Department believes it appropriate to impose only those nondiscrimination requirements required by the Constitution and federal statutes," the rule states.

The ruling was slated to take effect on February 11.

Although she believes the rule is primarily to benefit faith-based adoption agencies, Julie Kruse, director of federal policy for LGBTQ advocacy group Family Equality, notes that it could also allow such actions as homeless shelters turning away queer people.

On the first night of the Biden administration, the new President issued an executive order that extends the previous nondiscrimination protections to LGBTQ people. Biden's order supports former decisions of education, fair housing, and immigration acts which "prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation, so

long as the laws do not contain sufficient indications to the contrary."

The executive order overturns the HHS rule about federally contracted social services providers and their ability to discriminate based on religious beliefs, such as not allowing gay people to adopt. It is worth noting that the faith-based services affected are those which receive government funds.

In another religious liberty related issue, Biden also issued a proclamation ending the ban on travelers from several Muslim-majority countries. Instead of a ban, the White House plans to apply a "rigorous, individualized vetting system" to requests for visitation to the United States.

## Church Resources for Waymarks Readers

Waymarks readers are familiar with the Church's stance on religious liberty, but your Adventist friends may not be. Waymarks invites you to guide them to the information available on both the Adventist World Church website and the *Adventist World* magazine website.

In a search of "religious liberty" on both these sites, Waymarks found much information. The Church site included official statements

on abortion, transgenderism, homosexuality, same-sex unions, freedom of speech and defamation of religion, and religious minorities, among other topics.

Searching the Adventist World site produced articles on promoting religious liberty worldwide, U.S. Supreme Court decisions on religious liberty, the Adventist U.S. Senate Chaplain recognized for his role in religious liberty, and much more.

## Resources

### Adventist Church:

- <https://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/>
- <https://www.adventistliberty.org>

### Adventist World:

- <https://www.adventistworld.org/?s=religious+liberty>

- *A bipartisan resolution introduced in 2019, which called for the global repeal of blasphemy, heresy, and apostasy laws, was unanimously passed by Senate in December 2020. The resolution urges 84 foreign countries to repeal such laws and release imprisoned individuals.*
- *The New Hampshire Supreme Court, in December 2020, ruled in favor of religious freedom to use psychedelic mushrooms, overturning the 2018 conviction of a North Country resident for possession of the psilocybin mushrooms used in the Native American-based religion he practices. The four justices said that the New Hampshire Constitution's right of religion is stronger than protections under the U.S. Constitution, which requires a stricter balancing test in cases of religious use of illegal drugs.*
- *The U.S. Supreme Court is ordering a judicial review of the Texas ban that keeps clergy out of the execution chamber. A federal judge in Brownsville, TX, has been ordered to review the legality of the matter. Formerly, Christian chaplains and Muslim imams were allowed, but the state ended the practice in 2019 after refusing to accommodate a Buddhist inmate.*

# COVID-19 Vaccinations, *Continued from page 1*

cines are produced as medication to save lives, not to serve as food. [Additionally, the COVID-19 vaccines are vegan, and contain no animal nor fetal tissue.]

• **Preservatives:** There are no preservatives in these two COVID-19 vaccines, which is why they require deep freeze/freezer facilities for storage and transport. The vaccine is carefully purified.

• **DNA/mRNA:** Both referenced vaccines are based on mRNA, which is a first for vaccines, but the technology has been used in medical treatments for the past 15 years. The vaccine enters into a cell's cytoplasm (the fluid within the cell), where it stimulates the production of antibodies to fight the SARS-CoV-2's spike protein. Since it does not enter the nucleus of the host cell, it does not change the DNA or genetic structure/function.

• **Church Overall Stance on Vaccinations:** The Seventh-day Adventist Church

places strong emphasis on health and well-being. The Adventist health emphasis is based on biblical revelation, the inspired writing of E. G. White (co-founder of the Church), and on peer-reviewed scientific literature. As such, we encourage responsible immunization/vaccination, and have no religious or faith-based reason not to encourage our adherents to responsibly participate in protective and preventive immunization programs. We value the health and safety of the population, which includes the maintenance of "herd immunity."

• **Vaccination Exemption:** We are not the conscience of the individual church member, and recognize individual choices. These are exercised by the individual. The choice not to be immunized is not and should not be seen as the dogma nor the doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**"The choice not to be immunized is not and should not be seen as the dogma nor the doctrine of the ... Adventist Church."**

• **Controversy and the Church's Mission:** Using the introduction of a vaccine to stir up an eschatological scenario of spiritual and cosmic proportions, or to oppose it on the basis of a faulty interpretation of Scripture, only distracts sincere believers from the real prophetic issues and the

Adventist Church's commitment to proclaim the gospel.

In the Church's statement, they reiterate, "The decision to be immunized or not is the choice of each individual, and should be taken in consultation with one's health-care provider. Personal research on the subject is import. We ultimately rely on following biblical health practices and the Spirit of Prophecy, and following God's leading in our lives, which will bring us peace and assurance in our decision making."

## Did you know?

The Southern Union Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty can assist you with many services. And, while we are unable to travel right now, we are still available for remote presentations — speaking appointments and/or webinars.

### Services

- **Religious accommodation cases**
- **Non-combatant immigration letters**
- **Unemployment issues if fired for religious reasons**
- **Sabbath testing issues**
- **And more...**

### Presentations

- **Religious liberty**
- **Current events**

Contact us if you need assistance or a speaker:

**770-408-1800**

# SCOTUS Rules Against FBI in Muslim No-Fly Case

An 8-0 decision by the Supreme Court in *Tanzin v. Tanvir* determined that federal officials may be personally liable if they violate an individual's religious rights. The plaintiffs accused the FBI of placing them on the no-fly list because they wouldn't be informants against others in

the Muslim community. One of the men wasn't able to visit his ailing mother in Pakistan, and also lost his job as a long-haul truck driver since he couldn't fly home after a one-way delivery.

Liberals and conservatives both may have mixed reaction to the decision. Some will

be concerned about holding law enforcement officers liable for actions that, the court has previously judged benign. Others, while sympathizing with the plaintiffs, fear that it could empower religious conservatives who seek exemptions from anti-discrimination laws.

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## Adventist Religious Liberty Leaders Conduct Webinar

Religious liberty department directors and attorneys conducted a public webinar in January 2021, presenting and responding to questions on such topics as worship during pandemic, recent executive orders, the Supreme Court, COVID-19 vaccinations, social equity and racial justice, Sabbath accommodation, the Johnson Amendment, and PPP government loans to churches. Participants included Amireh Al-Haddad, John Ashmeade, Orlan Johnson, Bettina Krause, Nick Miller, and Alan Reinach.

### Thoughts from the webinar:

- Churches: Is worship essential? Do we wish churches to be comparative to Costco or bars when deciding guidelines?
- Look for new administration to focus more on church safety, hate-based crimes, and liberties that affect more than evangelicals.
- Religious conservatives are currently undermining separation of church and state, such as the Montana case with tax dollars used for church schools.
- Ashmeade pointed out that you never want one par-

ty to be in power too long. More rights are protected than lost when parties in power change every four or eight years.

- A Sabbath accommodation case in the Southern Union is waiting to be picked up by SCOTUS.
- Churches should be engaged with politicians and religious leaders in your area to meet community needs, but should not invite political candidates to speak.

The North American Division webinar can be found in its two-hour entirety at <https://youtu.be/nE5luWCU6HI>.

**Miller noted that “some of us hold our religious liberty principle as self-protection rather than for everyone.”**