



*Growing in the Grace and Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ...*

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### **Statement on Christian Responsibility to Not Forsake the Assembling of Ourselves Together**

In light of numerous governmental decrees seeking to prohibit churches from assembling together in person, the Elders of Hope Community Bible Church believe it is necessary to clarify believers' responsibility to continue meeting together in person as a corporate church body for worship and edification. These affirmations will direct the church's policies as circumstances present themselves.

1. We affirm that all authority, to any human institution, is granted by God, to whom He wills, for the purposes stipulated by Scripture. We further affirm that any authority has as its primary purpose the duty to glorify God (Matthew 28:18; John 19:11; Romans 11:36, 13:1).
2. We affirm that any authority has only the authority that has been granted to them by God, and that no authority has jurisdiction beyond that which God has granted (Acts 5:29; 1 Corinthians 4:6).
3. We affirm that Christians have a God-ordained charge to voluntarily submit to lawful authorities in obedience to God (Romans 13:2-7; 1 Peter 2:13-15 – see points 8-9 for scope and limitations).
4. We affirm that Christ alone is Lord over His Church. We affirm that no authority except Christ has the jurisdiction to prescribe or restrict the manner of worship for local church assemblies. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36; 1 Peter 5:4). We affirm that no government has the authority to act as the interpreter of Scripture. We affirm that the church, not the government, has been endowed by Christ with the authority and responsibility to act as the "pillar and support of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).
5. We affirm that in such instances as when government goes beyond its bounds and seeks to infringe upon God-given commands for Christian living, Christians have a duty to obey God rather than men. Governments can neither prevent Christians from obeying God nor compel Christians to disobey God (Acts 5:29; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Acts 14:19-20).
6. We affirm that Christ has issued commands to His people in Scripture. These commands are to be obeyed, and they include commands for both daily, personal, Christian living as well as corporate, Christian community. We affirm that one such command of Christ is to assemble together in person on a weekly basis as a church body for the purpose of worshipping God and the edification of the saints. This weekly assembly primarily occurs as the morning worship service on the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; Hebrews 10:25) but is not necessarily limited to only a morning service on the Lord's Day (Acts 2:46; 1 Corinthians 11:20-22).

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***Sola Scriptura***  
Scripture Alone

***Solus Christus***  
Christ Alone

***Sola Gratia***  
Grace Alone

***Soli Fide***  
Faith Alone

***Soli Deo Gloria***  
God's Glory Alone

7. We affirm that while the church body is commanded to gather corporately, that individual members may be on occasion unable to do so. When done for good reason, this does not constitute forsaking the assembly. We affirm that the church body, led by the elders, still has the task of ministering to such individuals (James 5:14).
8. We affirm that when governments seek in good faith to temporarily restrict the corporate gathering of the saints for a brief time, that churches should adopt the default position of continuing to meet together, but that they should carefully consider the circumstance and, if possible, voluntarily acquiesce for a short time for the benefit of society and to live a peaceable life (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 1 Timothy 2:2).
9. We affirm that when governments seek in bad faith, using false rationales, to enact excessive, lengthy, onerous, ongoing, open-ended, or targeted restrictions against church assemblies, that churches have an obligation to continue their normal meeting in person for the Lord's Day service despite any repercussions threatened by the government (Acts 5:29; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Acts 14:19-20).
10. We affirm that defying unlawful orders by governments will often result in temporal, adverse consequences, such as social stigma, physical attacks, fines, imprisonment, and even death. We affirm that our privilege to obey God is not contingent upon such consequences, and that such suffering is God's will, and that undergoing such suffering with a joyful heart while continuing in obedience to God is a mark of spiritual maturity and glorifies God (John 15:18,16:2; James 1:2; 1 Peter 4:19).

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