



Tuesday, August 24, 2021

Dear Conference Family,

Over the past week, we have seen a national return to the use of masks in public settings. Both the Washington and Oregon governors re-enacted their state-wide mask mandates. This is disappointing to us, it may be to you as well. The end of COVID seemed so close a few months ago, yet numbers across the nation are increasing at an alarming rate.

With the addition of stricter mask mandates, along with other mandates, some may see harbingers of end time events and feel compelled to take a stand for religious freedom.

While everything may well up within us to say enough is enough, my mind goes to the life of Christ. His was a life of service for the betterment of others. He constantly dealt with those who sought to derail His mission of sharing the character of His Father with a dying world. He demonstrated dealing with rules and regulations of a secular government by stating the principle to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." Matthew 22:21.

Later, Peter counseled us to submit "to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king, as supreme, or to governors." He then goes on to admonish us, as servants of God, not to use our "liberty as a cloak for vice." 1 Peter 2:13, 14, 16.

We are further counseled by the pen of inspiration, especially in reference to end-time events, to adhere to a major principle. That principle is that we, as God's people, should do nothing to bring undue criticism upon our mission. While God has given us the health message and the truths about the Sabbath and other Biblical doctrines, we must follow Jesus' example in respecting others and dealing with civil authorities.

God desires to write His law in our hearts so that we "will sooner disobey all the laws of man than to deviate in the least from the commandment of God." At the same time, "it is our duty in every case to obey the laws of the land, unless they conflict" with the law of God. 1T 361:1

In speaking of last-day events, we are counseled to do everything in our power to comply, even with Sunday laws, when they come, without dishonoring God (see 9T 232-236). We can see how quickly long-awaited for events could occur in our nation and around the world. We need to be aware of the days in which we are living. While it is inconvenient, the mandate for the wearing of masks does not conflict with the written Word of God or contravene any of His Commandments spoken at Sinai.

We are given clear counsel regarding the last events of earth's history. The current mask mandates by the governors of Washington and Oregon, though inconvenient, do not prohibit us from the worship due our Creator. Additionally, health and safety of our members should always remain a high priority. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the Conference Administration that our churches work in harmony with state and local health authorities regarding these mandates.

May God grant to us His power and vision to keep the mission to share Jesus ever before us. It is our desire that the day will be soon when we will see each other as we are, not just without our masks, but face-to-face with our Master and Lord.

Upper Columbia Conference
Administrative Officers