



**OPINION PIECE**  
**23<sup>RD</sup> MAY 2020**  
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NZ's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has been staunch in her stance, unlawfully overreaching with her powers, stating that churches cannot gather with more than 10 people.

Yet, on the other hand, you have the NZ Police giving churches the green-light to hold large services. On their NZ Police website 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020, the Police have officially released the following 'Operational Policing Guidelines (supplement) - COVID-19 Places of worship' that states...

*"Places of worship may open under Alert Level 2"*

*"Depending on the size of a venue, multiple groups of 10 could be present at a service, provided that each group was 2m apart from each other and that each group complied with any record-keeping requirements (depending on whether they were a lower risk gathering or a gathering of friends and whanau). This assumes that people involved do comply at all times with the distancing restrictions, and don't, for example, mingle more widely at the end of a service. Family or whanau who reside together in their household may remain within 2 metres of each other."*

The Police are not placing any limit on how many groups of ten you can have, instead allowing the size of the venue to be the determining factor.

On Monday Jacinda claimed her position on this matter was from Crown Law advice. Yet in an internal memo dated 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020 the NZ Police state: *"The COVID-19 Public Health (Alert Level 2) Order 2020 (the Order) is silent on places of worship specifically, however they are likely to be a business/service under clauses 11 and 12 (if offering food/drink) of the Order. In particular, places of worship are likely to be event facilities and clause 11(1)(a)(iv) applies."*

Jacinda has never owned up to her responsibility with all of this. She had advice from the Minister of Health to close the border sooner than she did. She had ample warning, yet she allowed multiple infections to easily come across our border. She failed to protect us all at the most critical point. And now, NZ churches are being punished the most, shut down and locked up, when she is the one who failed to do her job and protect us at the border.

Then fresh in this Friday, Dr Ashley Bloomfield announces one new case, and in the next breath, he attacks the churches not meeting again! That is totally unwarranted when there have been no cases linked to churches in New Zealand.

So here we have the Prime Minister saying one thing, the Police saying another thing, the Minister of Health saying yet another thing.... so who's right? is it any wonder throughout this debacle I decided I'm best to make my own decision.

While Jacinda has tried to hypnotise and lull us over lockdown into believing she has supreme power, it turns out our police force are only accountable to our politicians for the 'administration' of police services, but they act independently in law enforcement matters. The police can only act on what is lawful. They can only act on what is in black and white law, not subjective or best practice musings of a partial prime minister, but instead, they must rely on cold hard facts/law.

The ram-rod COVID-19 Public Health Response Bill does not refer to 'places of worship' at all. Not once! Yet Jacinda singled out churches in her application of their powers, seemingly with great delight. Also with no regard to the great personal and spiritual impact on hundreds of church congregations throughout this great nation.



Which further proves the point I've been making all along, Jacinda is acting outside of what is enforceable by law. All of this COVID-19 power has gone to her head!

It would almost seem that the sweeping powers Labour sought to give police (enforcement officers) under this COVID-19 Public Health Response Bill has backfired on them, as the Police now use these powers to contradict and defy what the Prime Minister herself is saying. Good on the NZ Police for taking a stand, and doing what's right by the NZ public.

This has left many church leaders around the country confused and frustrated. My heart goes out to my fellow pastors, bishops and ministers of religion as they grapple with whether to meet or not, and many of them have reached out to me this past week to discuss the matter.

This week, as this additional information has come to light, I am glad to see my stand was justified, and legal, not that I needed the validation.

I believed right from the outset that the Prime Minister was acting unlawfully when she singled out churches, violating our human rights under the NZ Bill of Rights, therefore I've been very vocal about Destiny Church's decision to meet under Alert Level 2. As many would know we held a hugely successful and safe church service last Sunday, which perhaps seems grossly unfair to many of my colleagues, as they struggled to understand the rules. I hope the example Destiny Church has set, gives everyone confidence that churches can operate responsibly, but not fearfully.

It's important as people of faith that we understand our rights, particularly our rights to religious expression under the NZ Bill of Rights. If we do not know our rights, they can swiftly be taken from us, like taking candy from a baby. Then beyond knowing and understanding these rights, at the appropriate times, we need to be prepared to stand up and fight for these rights when they are being violated.

This is one of those times in New Zealand history!

In the words of Dr Martin Luther King Jr, *"If today I lived in a communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws."* King also aptly said, *"Freedom is never given voluntarily by the oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed."*

Now, is the time for Christians to rise up and stand up for our civil rights and freedoms. Now is the time for an uprising of our own New Zealand civil rights movement that will continue to advocate and fight for our religious freedoms and rights.

If we don't protect our Christian freedoms and rights, who will? Or will we wake up one day soon to find they have all been stripped away from us? This Sunday, I encourage all churches throughout New Zealand to open their doors to their church members, and let's make a stand, together!

I'm ready to boldly front foot this charge with a new civil rights movement, are you willing to join me on the frontline too? **[Click HERE to join the movement!](#)**

For further insight, read my recent articles here:

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