

Gaithersburg MD, January 17, 2022

Honorable Council members,

As we know, the "United States is built upon the promise of Freedom. The Founder honored that core promise by embedding the principle of religion in the First Amendment." Therefore, The Freedom of Religion is protected by the First Amendment in the following way:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof (...)."

In this sense, a believer protected by the Constitution has the right to request a religious exemption from a vaccination requirement, as recognized by the federal and state governments. Also, the Nuremberg Code (1947) and the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights established that mandatory vaccination violates Human Rights.

Our congregation does not prohibit the use of most vaccines and generally encourages them to safeguard personal and public health. However, it teaches that vaccination is not morally mandatory and must be voluntary. The believers must do an individual assessment and decide if the Covid-19 vaccine violates their religious beliefs for different arguments protected in the sacred scriptures.

The congregation teaches that a person may not be forced to accept medical intervention, including vaccination, and points out the moral, religious basis from which believers can determine if they should refuse certain vaccines.

In this sense, believers are morally obliged to obey their conscience. The federal and state government cannot force them to modify their conscience due to the constitutional protections of the First Amendment.

I judged it wrong to receive the Covid-19 vaccine because it violates my conscience for biblical reasons. That decision resulted from personal assessments, and the Congregational authorities cannot interfere with my decision.

It is so essential to note that the 14th Amendment to the Constitution prohibits the States from depriving persons of life, liberty, and property without due process of law. It also prohibits depriving them of equal protection of the law. Thus, if the county government agrees to prohibit unvaccinated persons from exercising their right to liberty, it would not only violate the 1st Amendment but the 14th Amendment.

The United States has been characterized by developing the highest standards of democracy and has proven that it is possible to achieve a democratic space where all the people who think differently can live and exercise their rights in community with a high degree of respect for each other. To impose distinctions, from a civil rights standpoint, between the vaccinated and unvaccinated would not only go against the U.S Constitution and the democratic

values that have defined the United States but would return us to the shameful and painful times of segregation.

Sincerely,

Angela Margarita Rey