

# Prominent evangelicals affirm science and public health

August 20, 2020

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Amid some churches' ongoing defiance of state pandemic safety rules, a group of prominent evangelicals has signed on to a statement affirming their belief in science and calling on Christians to follow the advice of public health experts.

[“A Christian Statement on Science for Pandemic Times”](#) expresses concern for the “politicization of science in the public square when so many lives are at stake.” Signers pledge to wear masks, get vaccinated and correct misinformation and conspiracy theories.

To date, the statement has been signed by 2,500 Christians; among them are theologians N.T. Wright and Richard Mouw, and the presidents of several seminaries, including Mark Labberton of Fuller Theological Seminary and Michael Le Roy of Calvin University. Signatories also include Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, and Lisa Sharon Harper, a popular writer and activist.

The statement was drafted by leaders of BioLogos, the nonprofit founded by Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, to bridge science and faith. Collins, a committed evangelical, was not involved in drafting the statement.

“We felt like the faith side was being stereotyped as all being on the anti-science side and we wanted to show there are a large number of Christians in this country who are supportive of rigorous science and think the public health measures are important,” said Deborah Haarsma, president of BioLogos.

First published Aug. 17, the statement follows the widely reported case of a Los Angeles megachurch led by pastor John MacArthur that has defied public health orders by meeting indoors without masks or social distancing. Grace Community Church filed a lawsuit challenging the coronavirus mandates.

The statement appears to allude to such churches, saying, “Our faith calls us to sacrifice ourselves for others and accept temporary limitations on our freedoms because we have a permanent and complete freedom in Christ.”

It also explains the scientific method of testing, vetting and arriving at consensus. And it sends a pointed message about heeding expert opinion: “... when Dr. Fauci, the nation’s leading infectious disease expert, tells us what scientists have learned about this infectious disease, he should be listened to,” the statement reads.

BioLogos, which receives much of its support from the John Templeton Foundation, takes concrete steps to educate evangelicals about science in a way that makes room for their faith. It accepts evolution and human-caused climate change, often debated topics in evangelicalism.