



## Faith Based Support for Vaccines

Many people turn to faith leaders for guidance and reassurance in times of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of those times. The NPAIHB's mission is to support the Northwest tribes in their delivery of culturally appropriate, high-quality healthcare. And, we know that guidance from spiritual leaders can be important to help guide our steps in this uncertain time.

Most religions have no prohibitions against vaccines and many strongly encourage them.<sup>1</sup> We thought you would like to learn what spiritual leaders are saying about the coronavirus vaccines. We can't include all religious traditions, but here are comments from some of our Traditional Healers and a cross-section of faith communities active in our region.

### Pope Francis, The Catholic Church

"Being vaccinated with vaccines authorized by the competent authorities is an act of love. And contributing to ensure the majority of people are vaccinated is an act of love. He added: "Vaccination is a simple but profound way of promoting the common good and caring for each other, especially the most vulnerable.

I pray to God that everyone may contribute their own small grain of sand, their own small gesture of love; no matter how small, love is always great. Contribute with these small gestures for a better future."<sup>2</sup> See Pope Francis here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY5rwTnjF0U>

### Imam Ammar Amonette, Islamic Center in Richmond, VA

"In case of an epidemic, you're not allowed to refuse vaccination even if there's a slight danger to you of a reaction. Although you may be able to refuse treatment when you're ill, you can't endanger others in the community. We have a religious duty and obligation to be vaccinated as long as competent science and medical authorities approve the vaccine."<sup>3</sup>



### Radine 'Deanie' Johnson, Culture & Heritage, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

"We have Traditional medicines, we have our beliefs, we have very strong spiritual upbringings. Our ancestors survived much devastation and held strong for us. If we want to continue to have this, we need to think hard about protecting our future generations and our elder wisdom keepers. It is our way to help one another thru these times because of our love for each other. Please get vaccinated. "

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.vumc.org/health-wellness/news-resource-articles/immunizations-and-religion>

<sup>2</sup> <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2021/08/18/210818a.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.webmd.com/vaccines/covid-19-vaccine/news/20210126/faith-leaders-spread-the-word-get-vaccinated>

## **Russell M. Nelson, President, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)**

“We find ourselves fighting a war against the ravages of COVID-19 and its variants... We know that protection from the diseases they cause can only be achieved by immunizing a very high percentage of the population. We urge individuals to be vaccinated. We can win this war if everyone will follow the wise and thoughtful recommendations of medical experts and government leaders.”<sup>4</sup>

## **Dr. Robert Jeffress, First Baptist Church, Dallas**

“We believe that all lives are sacred and it’s a gift from God that ought to be protected,” Dr. Robert Jeffress, the senior pastor at First Baptist said. “I believe the vaccine is an effective way to save lives and really, these vaccines are a gift from God that ought to be utilized.”<sup>5</sup>

## **Bishop Doug Beacham, International Pentecostal Holiness Church**

“In my view, that’s [the COVID-19 vaccine] really no different than when I was a kid, we took the polio vaccine and smallpox, and like a lot of folks, I’ve traveled internationally in my job, so I got a lot of shots and those are, I see that as part of just the ability God’s given humanity for stewardship of the earth and of ourselves.”<sup>6</sup>

## **Rabbi Micah Peltz, Senior Rabbi at Temple Beth Shalom in Cherry Hill, New Jersey**

“Jewish law and tradition include ethical obligations to pursue healthy living and to embrace established scientific practices that contribute to the well-being of all. Taking preventive measures against the spread of COVID-19 by wearing masks, washing hands and physical distancing are to be regarded as mitzvot and mandated by Jewish law. Vaccines approved by government health agencies are to be regarded as refuot b’dukot, established medical procedures, and with proper medical guidance Jews are obligated to be vaccinated.”<sup>7</sup>

## **Christian Scientists**

The church relies on members to make decisions that follow the golden rule, and says: “For more than a century, our denomination has counseled respect for public health authorities and conscientious obedience to the laws of the land, including those requiring vaccination... We see this as a matter of basic Golden Rule ethics and New Testament love.”<sup>8</sup>

## **The Gospel Coalition**

“We should strive to seek the common good ([Jer. 29:7](#)). The harm done to children from not getting vaccinated is exponentially greater than the harm—both physical and moral—of using the vaccines... We must always consider whether we are using our religious liberty or concern for parental rights as cover for a choice that may cause significant harm to the neighbors we are commanded to love ([Matt. 22:36-40](#)).”

## **Michael Ray Johnson, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla**

As a religious leader, I would like to encourage all tribal nations to get vaccinated, to continue your teaching of your traditional ways, and to become stronger by means of surviving another genocidal virus. Our ancestors have made it through the Measles, FLU, small pox, and many of the other foreign sicknesses that have been placed upon our lands. Be strong my people, stand together and fight this, GET VACCINATED, so that we may live to tell the generations ahead that YES, we did it, WE MADE IT and are still caretakers of MOTHER EARTH!!! EE-OW, ~mrj Heyoom Asa Kii

<sup>4</sup> <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/first-presidency-message-covid-19-august-2021>

<sup>5</sup> <https://dfw.cbslocal.com/2021/05/05/vaccines-gift-god-first-baptist-dallas-covid-19/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.christiansandthevaccine.com/episodes/beacham>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.jewishexponent.com/2021/01/28/getting-a-covid-19-vaccine-is-a-jewish-imperative/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.christianscience.com/press-room/a-christian-science-perspective-on-vaccination-and-public-health>