



## Current Events :: International Codes May Force Home Churches, Small Groups to Pony Up, Shut Down or Go Underground

### International Codes May Force Home Churches, Small Groups to Pony Up, Shut Down or Go Underground - posted by

In light of the recent incarceration of Michael Salman, Christians nationwide are expressing their concerns as to whether they may be forced to adhere to commercial building codes if they wish to utilize their home for regular gatherings, including worship meetings and Bible studies.

Salman was recently jailed for operating a "church" on the family's 4.6 acre residential property without conforming to commercial code, and is currently serving a 60-day sentence.

Aaron Carreon-Ainsa, Phoenix City Prosecutor, told Christian News Network that Salman's charges only pertained to the 2,000-square foot building in Salman's back yard and not gatherings in his living room. However, correspondence from the City of Phoenix to Mr. Salman, written before he moved his gatherings to the building in his back yard, indicate that he was not allowed to hold Bible studies in his home either.

"Bible studies are not allowed to be conducted in your residence or the barn on your property as these structures do not comply with the construction code for this use," one letter from the city stated, which Salman presented in an online video. Another letter from Assistant Development Services Director Robert J. Goodhue, now retired, outlined, "...Bible studies are not allowed in the residence... The simple and direct answer is that the Bible study use requires a change of occupancy."

rest of article here:

<http://christiannews.net/international-codes-may-force-home-churches-small-groups-to-pony-up-shut-down-or-go-underground/>

### Re: International Codes May Force Home Churches, Small Groups to Pony Up, Shut Down or Go Underground, on: 2012/7/15 10:37

What trickery this so called Christian paper is using to get its message across.

As one poster has mentioned who lives in the Phoenix area said that bible studies are conducted all the time in people's homes and no one is shutting them down.

It's brainless people like Michael Salman who is doing a great injustice to all believers everywhere for not complying to the laws of the city of Phoenix that if you're going to have a 2,000 square foot building to house a church gathering that you get the necessary permits and petition to have it zoned for commercial purposes, as he was living in a residential zoned part of town. Anyone with any sense knows that, but it appears that this clown didn't have it because he was given ample time to get the necessary papers and permits but failed to do so. He was warned of the consequences months ago but did not do it.

So whose fault is that? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know the answer.

When we started our business in a residential zone we had to go to the city and seek a re-zoning of the area. Because other people lived on the street, letters had to be sent to each home owner on the street to let them know what we were planning and if they had any objections that they bring forth their rebuttals. We had one person that didn't like the idea but she was shot down by the rest of the people on the street who thought that she was opposed to development, so we were able to get what we needed, it was re-zoned for commercial purposes and we've been here for 30 years now. If Mr. Salman had done what he was supposed to do, the outcome could have been a lot better.

Re: , on: 2012/7/15 11:02

The article states that Salman got that "anti 'Home' Bible Study letter" which wasn't solely about his building. This is Not about Salman - it's about Freedom of assembly and religion. This is nuts. What's the difference between having a Bible with a group or having any other type big get-togethers - which folks do every weekend around here. So much so, that it's actually dangerous to try to get around all of their parked cars on our narrow street --- they're just "partying" and that's No Problem. I've never heard of those type Parties being shut down - no matter where I've lived.

This has been going on around the country for not a few decades now. The Rutherford Institute led by Mr. Whitehead and other such Christian Legal Defense groups, have been dealing with this for a very long time.

I'm not a political activist but this is one that needs every Christian and Jewish Lawyer to get on to. They stopped a group of Jewish Seniors from having their torah studies together in a Retirement Home about 20 or more yrs ago. I 'think' it was either Rutherford's or another Christian Legal Group that fought that case as well for those Seniors.

They've been coming after House groups for that long as well. Jay Sekalow with his group, John Whitehead with Rutherford's Institute and others have had these reports on Christian radio and papers for as far back as I can remember.

YET - anyone can have a drunken party any time they want or any other get together - even with loud music - as long as they turn down the volume by whatever time their town ordinance says and as long as it's not Christian music.

Before, these reports were not as often heard, but when you stick that word "International" into city code ordinances - Oh Yes - we sure do have big problems now and I do believe unless the Attorneys like Whitehead and others can get us back out from that term "International" - then we're seeing the same UN-style government that uses China as their ideal. If that's the case then - welcome to the New World Order.

Re: , on: 2012/7/15 11:25

From the article,

Quote:  
----- He pointed to the order released earlier this year from Judge Sally Gaines to Michael Salman, which stated that Salman could have  
Â“no further assemblies (more than 12 people)  
-----

This is how they are defining a "Bible Study" more than 12 persons, not a bible study of a few friends.

Why?

Quote:  
----- code officials outlined that if a person lived in a residential zone, and they were meeting regularly with others for prayer or Bible study at a residence, it would be a violation of the applicable zoning ordinances, since the activity would then be considered to be commercial. Commercial activities are not allowed in residential zones.  
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Quote:  
----- Â“He can have 12 people there the way it is right now,Â”  
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**Re: International Codes May Force Home Churches, Small Groups to Pony Up, Shut Down o, on: 2012/7/15 11:32**

Thanks Oracio. I think the issue is about the size of the Bible study in the Home, and the regularity; sequence of them.

It is one thing to have a Bar Mitzvah that 100 people show up to, and block traffic on that street , but quite another to pra ctice such a gathering weekly, or Bi-weekly, intentionally breaking the law to serve your purposes.

This is the issue here. In America you cannot build whatever you desire wherever you want to. We have building codes and commercial clauses we must live by. For instance, A Tattoo Parlor/Tavern decides to convert your neighbors home f or it's business, a 24/7 enterprise. This house is right next door, and they do.

The traffic is loud and continuous, as is the noise, and the clientele are zombie like. Must you endure this? In some coun tries, yes, but in America, we have laws; even in the smallest of towns; Zoning and Commercial laws that protect you.

There are 1206 listings and places of worship in Phoenix. Everyone of them is free to worship as they please, and they a ll meet the Zoning and commercial building codes enforced by the city government. Why was Salman singled out? Why were they not persecuted? I am sure many of them also have house churches, and smaller meeting places.

Why Salman?..the persecuted one. I suspect that Salman saw it more profitable to own the church house, increasing his private portfolio. No one could, or would take it from him if the church moved on. It increased property value at the same time. He did not care if it did not meet city code, or if his neighbors were inconvenienced in traffic jams, or having their p eace broken by the crowds.

After all, freedom of religion! I do not sympathize for him....and he was warned that his would happen. This is not persec ution, but prideful obstinacy, and he, and this newspaper are playing the persecution tune to the hilt.

**Re: , on: 2012/7/15 11:43**

More from the article,

Quote:  
----- Carreon-Ainsa stated that if presidential candidate Mitt Romney were to have family gatherings at home with his five children, that would be permissible. Â“But, if the neighbors come over for Sunday dinner , and now there are 25-30, maybe we . That may very well be.Â”  
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From his lawyer,

Quote:  
----- John Whitehead of The Rutherford Institute, whose legal organization is representing Salman remarked, Â“There are numerous vio lations in everyoneÂ’s home. Â… We want people to be in safe buildings, if theyÂ’re going to do this to him, then start sweeping other homes .Â”  
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Though I don't agree with everything this lawyer has said, however, I take his meaning when he says, "if they're going t o do this to him", it was a steep sentence that should not have been given. A 6 month jail sentence would have sufficed, but all they have done for the Christian fanatics out there is make him into a martyr.

**Re: , on: 2012/7/15 11:49**

From the government of the city of Phoenix, <http://phoenix.gov/news/071212salmanfacts.html>

July 12, 2012

City of Phoenix Information The Michael Salman court case is about building safety. Building and safety codes are in-place to protect the safety and welfare of all of our residents. Some of the relevant facts in this case include:

1) A house of worship is allowed in any zoning district in the City of Phoenix

2) The case is about the building that is used for regular assembly does not meet construction and fire code requirements for assembly

3) All houses of worship in the City of Phoenix must conform to the same codes

Mr. Salman had regular gatherings of up to 80 people. He held services twice a week and collected a tithe at the services. The building that he held services in had a dais and chairs were aligned in a pew formation. He held himself out as being a church through the media (Harvest Christian Church) and claimed a church status for tax exemption purposes on his property.

Due to the regular, reoccurring high vehicular traffic in this quiet residential neighborhood, neighbors repeatedly complained about the public assembly occurring on his property. Because of the multiple, reoccurring complaints, the City investigated the activity and discovered numerous building code violations primarily related to fire safety standards. Once apprised of these violations, the City could be held liable for not enforcing safety code requirements in the event anyone was injured on the premises. Prior to commencement of prosecution, Mr. Salman was asked, repeatedly, to comply with the safety codes of the City. He chose to ignore these requests for voluntary compliance prior to the commencement of any proceedings.

Below is a summary of the case from the City's Law Department, including quotes from the relevant court judgments.

#### Timeline

Mr. Salman's interaction regarding his property dates back to 2006, when he was advised by the Zoning Administrator that his property was analogous to a church and required compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.

During 2007, Mr. Salman had interaction with the City regarding his attempts to build on his property. The issue revolves around Mr. Salman's assertion that he is building a detached garage, when the building is actually to function as a church. Mr. Salman builds, despite not having a proper permit. On May 1, 2007, he is cited for, and eventually pleads responsible to building without the required permit. (Pleads responsible 7/18/2007)

In the Fall of 2007, Mr. Salman is notified several times by the City that he needs to obtain the proper permits and approvals before holding church services on his property.

In 2008, Mr. Salman's church, Harvest Christian Fellowship Community Church, is issued a Building Permit to construct a 2,000 square foot private game room accessory to an existing single family residence. The permit states, "Any other occupancy or use (business, commercial, assembly, church, etc.) is expressly prohibited pursuant to the City of Phoenix Building Code and Zoning Ordinances."

During 2009-2010 church services are held on Mr. Salman's property without proper permits and in violation of safety concerns. As a result, Mr. Salman is cited.

On January 4, 2010, Harvest Christian Fellowship Community Church is found responsible for 96 civil code violations. The Court notes, "the State is not saying the Salmans can't run a church or have worship services at the location, but the State is saying that if they do so, they must do it properly and in accord with the building, fire, and zoning codes."

On August 30, 2010, Mr. Salman was found guilty of 67 Class 1 Misdemeanors. The Court stated, "Everyone is entitled under the United States Constitution to worship as they please. But there is a reason for these codes and that is for public safety. And that, I believe, is all that the State is asking is that the Code violations be rectified."

Mr. Salman appealed his convictions. On June 2, 2011, the Maricopa County Superior Court upheld the convictions and stated, "the Defendant was engaged in public or church activities, and further that Defendant's convictions did not violate his Constitutional right to religious freedom."

The Court sentenced Mr. Salman to serve jail time. He was ordered to report to jail on June 18, 2012. The county jail relies on a Department of Public Safety table of criminal codes to confirm the basis for the incarceration when a person self surrenders. The table did not include the particular charge on Mr. Salman's confinement order. Mr. Salman was, theref

ore, not incarcerated. The table has been corrected.

On June 28, 2012, a Probation Revocation Arraignment was held alleging violations of Mr. Salman's sentence by twice having a gathering in excess of 12 people on his premises while not in compliance with all ordinances and failing to cooperate with the Court's Financial Screening.

Romans 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

**Re: , on: 2012/7/15 12:10**

Iran says they are not doing anything wrong persecuting Christians? They are only upholding Islamic cues. China says they are not doing anything wrong persecuting Christians. Only upholding public harmony. When an Islamic country bulldozed a church to make room for a mosque. They say we are not doing anything wrong. This land was already zoned for a mosque. And Phoenix says we are not persecuting Christians. Just concerned about public safety.

Why does this sound familiar?

Besnaster.

**Re: International Codes May Force Home Churches, Small Groups to Pony Up, Shut Down or, on: 2012/7/15 12:16**

Again - THIS IS NOT ABOUT SALMAN ...

Quote from Article -

"Bible studies are not allowed to be conducted in your residence or the barn on your property as these structures do not comply with the construction code for this use," one letter from the city stated, which Salman presented in an online video. Another letter from Assistant Development Services Director Robert J. Goodhue, now retired, outlined, "...Bible studies are not allowed in the residence..." The simple and direct answer is that the Bible study use requires a change of occupancy."

The **INTERNATIONAL** Code Council

The letters cite the Phoenix building code, which was written by the International Code Council (ICC). The city adopted the 2006 code as many municipalities nationwide have done also."

I've heard reporting from the Rutherford Institute and other Christian Legal Defense groups for almost 30 yrs and this is much bigger than "just Salman" and none of them would defend a man unless there was something dangerous attached to his case unless it affected EVERY HOUSE CHURCH, EVERY HOME BIBLE STUDY, or EVERY SENIOR CITIZEN THAT LIVES IN SENIOR HOUSING AND HAS TORAH OR BIBLE STUDIES THERE --- WHETHER JEW OR CHRISTIAN.

What part of INTERNATIONAL don't you guys understand?

These are "Constitutional Legal Groups" that have been representing children in schools drawing pictures of Jesus and being reprimanded or disciplined for bringing up HIS NAME and thousands of cases like that for \*decades\*.

<https://www.rutherford.org/issues/>

**Re: , on: 2012/7/15 12:27**

I have posted similar cases in San Juan Capistrano and Gilbert AZ. In San Juan a couple was fined for having a Bible study in their home. In Gilbert a church was told that home Bible studies were not allowed.

Phoenix is just part of a larger pattern happening across America.

Bearmaster.

**Re: International Codes May Force Home Churches, Small Groups to Pony Up, Shut Down o, on: 2012/7/15 12:28**

Ah, never mind.

If the title isn't enough ....

Thanks anyway, Brother Oracio.

**Re: , on: 2012/7/15 15:13**

JiG what your not seeing is 'how' they are defining a 'Bible Study'.

They don't care if your having a bible study among friends with a few people. This is where everyone is missing it, their definition of a Bible Study is when it goes beyond a certain amount of people crammed into a residential building on a weekly basis.

Our minds are on the words "bible study" and on the words, "can't". And that is not what the article is saying.

Yes of course sometime in the future we may completely be barred from having any bible studies of any kind in our homes whether it be two or three, but this is not what this article is saying.

This whole entire international coding is all about safety. It's not the first international code. We've all heard of the International Standards. Any product we buy has some code that is recognized internationally, it's the same thing just using a different word. We have thousands of such standards codes if you like that are recognized worldwide, why don't we highlight those?

**Re: , on: 2012/7/15 15:20**

If Any number of folks, got together every Saturday or Sunday to watch the Yankees or Giants on their big screen TV and had enough of their own private acreage for parking - do you think these laws would apply or become "an International code" taboo?

Maybe not right yet.

A twist on a Quote by Pastor Niemoller:

First they came for the Disabled and Elderly and I did not speak out because I was neither.

Then they came for the House Churches/Groups and I did not speak out because I was not a member of one.

Then they came for the Constitutional Attorneys and I did not speak out because I didn't need one.

Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.

**Re: , on: 2012/7/15 15:21**

Approved what of Bibke studies being banned in other communities across the nation?

Bearmaster

**Re: , on: 2012/7/15 15:53**

Where Bearmaster and under what circumstances?

I am not asking in ignorance, I am sure there are, I am asking to inquire as to where they are in America. :-)

**Re: , on: 2012/7/15 16:17**

Quote:  
----- If Any number of folks, got together every Saturday or Sunday to watch the Yankees or Giants on their big screen TV and had enough of their own private acreage for parking - do you think these laws would apply or become "an International code" taboo?  
-----

Yes they would. Because neighbours would complain if it became a weekly thing. I've seen it happen on several occasions and it had nothing to do with Bible Studies.

I know what your saying in the other though. It's like the frog sitting on the stove in cold water, as the water heats the frog adapts to it's surroundings but is oblivious to the fact that it's slowly being cooked alive.

So what is to be done if it is going on? Stock up, buy generators, build a bomb shelter?

What did Jesus do when they plotted against Him? He went about His Fathers business.

What did Daniel do when all his colleagues passed laws against him? He continued on working and continued to pray.

There is no mention in the New Testament that we are to take up swords and placards and take to the streets, or run to the state legislature to demand our rights.

So exactly what is it that we are supposed to do?

I am going to continue on working at what I am doing and seeking the Lord until I hear instructions to do otherwise.

**Re: Approved, on: 2012/7/15 16:40**

San Diego CA, San Juan Capistrano, CA, and Gilbert AZ are three examples where Bible studies are considered illegal. In these three communities home leaders were told their studies violated zoning laws or land use.

Google under search protocol "Examples of Illegal Bible Studies in America". Phoenix is just part of a larger picture. Gives more urgency to the SI conference in the fall.

Bearmaster.

**Re: - posted by pilgrim777, on: 2012/7/15 16:44**

If you alternate homes and they are in different neighborhoods, you should not have this problem. If you meet at the same person's home each week, then yes, that could bother neighbors. Wonder why they could not meet in a different home each weekend?

Pilgrim

**Re: Pilgrim, on: 2012/7/15 16:59**

Brother your wisdom is sound. I suppose in the case of Phoenix or San Juan Capistrano they could have met in different homes.. I believe this is what the church did in Acts. But Gilbert AZ has said all Bible studies are banned in their corporate limits. They claim it violates land use

This is why Phoenix is not a random example. In the case of San Diego, San Juan, and Gilbert. We are talking meetings in home. So in reality precedent is being set to outlaw home Bible studies or house churches.

Bearmaster.

**Re: - posted by pilgrim777, on: 2012/7/15 17:17**

Yes, in those respects, precedents are being set. I agree.

This will be very interesting to follow.

Pilgrim

**Re: , on: 2012/7/15 17:20**

Is anyone aware of other communities where home Bible studies are banned. I am speaking of communities in the U S or Canada?

Bearmaster.

**Re: , on: 2012/7/15 21:20**

From what I read about the San Diego incident, the ACLU entered the picture which the county dropped the citation. That was back in 09.

I wish believers were a bit more wiser, why not spread their cars out evenly so it doesn't look like there is a convention or to draw attention to one's place.

**Re: , on: 2012/7/15 21:24**

"Build bomb shelters?" /o:

Paul was a Roman citizen and appealed to the laws of Rome.

There is nothing - no laws anywhere that say that you can't have as many people over to your house - for whatever reason - as long as they have parking on their property or legal parking on the street and there's no loud noise after 10pm .

JUST because someone opens a Bible or prays while these people are at your home should never put anyone in a differing position with the State.

Many Churches have to split up their mid-week meetings to a number of homes.

Many Churches meet for fellowship dinners at someone's home After they've attended the morning Church service and OH MY, someone may actually open a Bible or a hymn book after these fellowship dinners.

Most of these mid-week groups that I'm aware of - the people hosting these have ample parking on their own property and large enough homes to accommodate groups larger than just 12.

It is no-ones business what you do with your company at your house as long as no-one in your house is doing drugs or anything criminal.

This is making the having of guests in your home and opening a Bible "criminal behavior".

Where does this slippery slope go from here. Making any family over a total of 12 people illegal?

To me, this is paranoid behavior on the part of the government. Fearing more than 12 people "might do something." Wh at? I don't know! You'd have to be a paranoid State official to answer that one.

Bomb shelter. /o:

**Re: Approved, on: 2012/7/15 22:15**

Brother at least they could car pool. Not only create less attention. But save on gas.

Bearmaster.