



# Masks, Vaccines, Religion, and the Usual Suspects



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6 hr ago ↗

Buried on the Coronavirus page in the A Section in last Sunday's Spokesman (September 26), there was an article entitled "[Rally against vaccine mandates draws 4,000 to downtown](#)". The gathering was organized as the "Rally for Medical Freedom," a title that obscures the motives of the rally's principle organizers, Caleb Collier and Matt Shea. Shea and Collier have been featured speakers at nearly every anti-government protest and rally from the early days of the coronavirus lockdown to the present. Just enter their names in the Search window at Spokesman.com. (See [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).) Long before the coronavirus, Matt Shea allied with Ammon Bundy during the [Malheur Wildlife Refuge armed standoff](#) in 2016, something we would all do well to remember.

Matt Shea declined to run again for the seat he had held as Washington State Representative from LD4 (Spokane Valley north to Mt. Spokane) after the exposure and controversy over his tract, "The Biblical Basis for War." Since then Shea, Collier, and company seize every opportunity to rile their far right religious flock against existing government. While regional Intensive Care Units fill with unvaccinated Covid-19 patients, the inanity of Shea and Collier's current protests against vaccinations and masks is exceeded only by the extremist religious fervor with which they pump up their followers over gun "rights", abortion (as "The Church at Planned Parenthood"), the establishment of the theocratic breakaway "Liberty State", and over any effort government might make to limit the current pandemic.

Shea declined to run again for his seat as the state representative from LD4 last fall after being [credibly accused of "domestic terrorism"](#). For at least the last ten years Shea has disguised his anti-government agitation in a cloak supposed Christian piety. Shortly after leaving the Washington State legislature in January 2021 Shea's extremist religious politics came on full display as he took on the mantle of pastor of the Covenant Church. Ken Peters, the founder and prior head pastor of this non-denominational entity on Princeton Ave in near north Spokane was moving on to establish more "patriot churches" elsewhere. (Non-denominational

simply means that as a pastor in such a church there are no institutional checks and balances on the finances or on the personality cult the pastor establishes with his [or her] flock.)

In Pastor Ken Peter's absence, Shea took over. When Peters returned from Nashville, Shea decamped with much of Peter's former Covenant Church flock to a new location in downtown Spokane in a large building at 115 E Pacific Avenue. (On google maps the building is labelled "Healing Rooms Ministries International Office". The building is also the address of the "Revival Culture Church".)

Caleb Collier is Shea's apparent aide-de-camp in all Shea's recent religio-political agitation. Collier, an ex-Marine who was once a council person on the City of Spokane City Council, is/was the co-host of "Church and State", a local podcast producer with a flashy, flag-draped website. (That website may or may not be up-to-date. Its last "Latest Episode[s]" is dated July 23, 2018.) Collier was recently identified as "executive field coordinator" for the John Birch Society. Rumor has it that he has been fired under questionable circumstances even from that extremist organization.

The common theme to all the protests that Matt Shea and Caleb Collier lead is straightforward: everything government tries to do is evil and must be resisted—resisted in the name of God and Shea and Collier's particular concept of "freedom". "Don't you dare attempt to quell a pandemic with a requirement to wear masks or get vaccinated; don't you dare attempt to limit the violent deaths by introducing common sense gun regulation; don't you dare suggest that Biden was elected in a free and fair election!" Behind it all among these religio-political assault weapons toters is the implied threat of an armed uprising. Shea's "The Biblical Basis For War" was a justification, not an outline for a Sunday school lesson. Shea and Collier, under the cloak of Christianity, are assembling an armed cult whose reason for being is to demonize and oppose government in any form but their own. Surely not everyone at the protest last Saturday fully subscribes to Shea and Collier's message, but these two men are assembling a coalition of gullible believers carrying assault weapons instead of pitchforks. That last Saturday's rally was entirely peaceful is no guarantee of future performance.

These people mean business. Learn their names and their backgrounds. Stay alert. Re-read the history of the takeover of the government of the Weimar Republic in 1920s and 30s Germany, by the religio-political movement of Nazi Aryanism. Take heed. It can happen here. It creeps up.

Keep to the high ground,

Jerry

P.S. This post was partly inspired by reading an opinion piece by a conservative commentator, Robert Kagan, last weekend in the Washington Post, entitled “[Our constitutional crisis is already here.](#)”



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