

Provincial Government Statements On COVID-19 and Places of Worship

British Columbia

The Government of BC has published this [COVID-19 Guidance to Faith-Based Organizations](#). It has not changed since March 31. Overall, any public gatherings, indoors or outdoors are limited to groups of 50 persons or fewer. However, this “guidance” for Faith-Based Organizations specifies that meetings should be no larger than 5 to 10 persons. All physical distancing and other measures to limit the spread of the virus are to be in place. There is ample guidance provided about not providing food or beverages in a congregational setting. It is still the guidance posted on the website as of June 8.

Other BC government documents potentially relevant to churches:

- Updated Order on [Mass Gathering Events](#) (dated May 22; an update to document of March 17.
- Order concerning [Overnight Camps for Children and Youth](#), dated May 29.

Alberta

Similarly, **the Government of Alberta** has published this [Guidance for Places of Worship](#), updated on May 23. It provides for maximum attendance of “**no more than 50 people, or 1/3 of building capacity, whichever is less,**” with proper exercising of physical distancing. Social activities such as lunches or dinners are not allowed. It specifically notes that “Congregational singing is a high-risk activity and is not allowed.”

On a page (not published as a PDF) titled, “[Gathering Restrictions](#),” some points are reinforced or stated even more clearly than the guidance document referenced above. Note, for example, that weddings must abide by the 15-person indoor gathering limit, and that “people age 60 years and older” are part of those people defined as “at greater risk.”

Alberta has also published [Guidance for Day Camps](#) – which does not generally apply to most Community of Christ activities (except Vacation Bible Schools), but this document carries the explicit statement that “Overnight camps are prohibited.”

Saskatchewan

The Government of Saskatchewan has published updated [Places of Worship Guidelines](#) that are effective as of June 8. The guidelines specify, “The allowable occupancy is one-third of the defined occupancy rate of the facility to a maximum of 30 individuals.” Physical distancing requirements are provided. A good list of “Guidelines for Hygiene and Cleaning” is provided along with a link to [cleaning and disinfection practices](#).

Singing is not prohibited, but it is strongly discouraged while procedures are provided in case singing happens.

These guidelines coincide with the beginning of Saskatchewan’s “Phase 3” of re-opening as of June 8. No date is specified for Phases 4 and 5 which will further reduce restrictions currently in place. Additional insight may be gained from the “[Public and Private Gatherings](#)” page.

Manitoba

The Government of Manitoba is now in “Phase 2” of its recovery and re-opening process. The main mention of “worship” guidelines is found on the “[Restoring Service Phase 2](#)” page by expanding the “Public Gatherings (May 22)” bullet. The main provision here is that indoor gatherings may now include up to 25 persons (up to 50 persons outdoors) with the requirement to implement standard public health provisions such as physical distancing, etc. I could find no other more-detailed document or page that spoke specifically to places of worship.

Compiled by Stephen Thompson
Canada West Mission Centre
June 8, 2020