

Updated Provincial COVID-19 Requirements for Churches

December 9, 2020

Given the increase in COVID-19 cases across Western Canada, all four provinces in the Canada West Mission Centre have updated their requirements for faith-based organizations within the last couple of weeks. I will highlight the primary change for each province below along with a link to the source of the information and to more detailed information for you to review if relevant.

British Columbia:

(as of November 19 and until at least January 8)

Religious in-person gatherings and worship services are suspended under the order. For example:

- Do not attend a service at a church, synagogue, mosque, gurdwara, temple, or other places of worship

Religious services can continue using remote or virtual attendance options, like Zoom or Skype.

You can still visit your place of worship for individual activities such as contemplation or personal prayer.

More Details: [Province-Wide Restrictions](#) (last updated December 8, 2020).

Also see the [Face Covering \(Mask\) Mandate](#) requiring masks in all public spaces, including places of worship.

Also see Phase 3 – [BC's Restart Plan](#) – see drop-down menu item for “Faith-based organizations including churches, synagogues and mosques;” last Updated November 18. NOTE: this document does NOT include the suspension of religious and worship services specified above.

Alberta:

(as of December 13 and for at least the next four weeks)

Mandatory restriction – Provincewide – Effective Dec. 13

Faith services are limited to 15% of fire code occupancy for in-person attendance:

- Services must be held at their normal location
- Physical distancing between households must be maintained
- Mask use is mandatory

Alternatively:

- Virtual or online services are recommended
- Drive-in services where people do not leave their vehicles and adhere to guidance are allowed

Additional safety measures:

- In-person faith group meetings and other religious gatherings are:
 - not permitted in private homes while these measures are in effect

- permitted when conducted at a place of worship as long as physical distancing and public health measures are followed
- Faith leaders and other speakers can remove their masks while speaking if there is a distance of 2 metres. The mask must be put on again once finished speaking.
- Group performance activities, such as choir singing and playing music, are permitted if they are normal worship practices and not for the purpose of entertainment. Performers must wear masks at all times.

More Details: [Enhanced Public Health Measures](#)

Also see: [Guidance for Places of Worship](#) (last update November 19; does NOT include the 15% of rated capacity limit announced on December 8)

Saskatchewan:

From the [Public Health Measures](#) page, updated November 19:

- All places of worship must reduce capacity to 30 people, including wedding, funeral, and baptismal services. No food or drink may be present or served.

More Details: [Places of Worship Guidelines](#) NOTE: I can see no date of last revision on this page. It does not look a lot different from the last time it was reviewed by CWM, although it does seem the lists of items in sections 2 (Guidelines for Accommodating Worship) and 4 (Guidelines for Higher Risk Activities) seem to me to be a bit longer than before. ALSO: There is no indication of a specified date of expiry, so it seems these provisions are in place until the next order or set of guidelines is released.

Manitoba:

Manitoba is in a “Critical” state of COVID-19 response province-wide as of November 21.

The following information appears on the provincial website under “[Winnipeg Regional Health Authority](#).”

- Gatherings in indoor or outdoor public places are limited to five persons for some specific purposes like weddings, funerals and physically distanced outdoor activities. The fundamentals should still be practiced in these situations, including mask wearing and frequent handwashing.
- Religious and cultural gatherings must close or be provided virtually only.

More Details: See the [Public Health Order](#) – specifically see section 15 of this order.

NOTE: This order is due to expire on December 11, three weeks after being implemented on November 21. Media reports today (December 9, online editions of Winnipeg Sun and Winnipeg Free Press) indicate the order has been extended to January 8.

These revisions actually do not affect very many congregations. Most congregations in Canada West Mission Centre are not meeting in-person. Some are meeting in on-line modes. Only one congregation is continuing to meet in-person

There have been no additional or new directives come from World Church about COVID-19 related issues.

Thank you for all that you are doing to maintain some semblance of congregational life and connection as we continue to make our way through these challenging times. Please let me know if you have any questions about the information provided here.

Grace and Peace,
--Steve

Stephen Thompson
Canada West Mission President



Community of Christ

steve@communityofchrist.ca

cell/text: 780-904-4389