



Focus on Religious Freedom

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"A nation that turns away from prayer will ultimately find itself in desperate need of it."
- Rabbi Jonathan Cahn, author of *The Harbinger*

Canceling Worship Persists in Europe & Canada

(A Harbinger for Further Restrictions in America?)

As the world continues to confront coronavirus, many leaders have paused the reopening of their countries, announcing new constraints on travel, gatherings, churches, synagogues, and mosques.

Ireland: "This Cabinet will go down in history as the most anti-Christian Government of all time ... to think people will be persecuted for going to Mass or having public worship," said a minister of the Irish Parliament. "140 people or more were in this room today voting on legislation. There's churches in this country bigger than this and yet you allow only 10 people in!" said another minister.⁽¹⁾

Scotland: A group of 27 church leaders argued the Scottish government acted beyond their emergency powers. Judge Lord Braid said the Scottish regulations disproportionately interfered with the freedom of religion. "I have not decided that all churches must immediately open... All I have decided is that the regulations ... went further than they were lawfully able to do."⁽²⁾ Rev. Dr. William Philip said that the Scottish Ministers, "approach to banning and criminalizing gathered church worship was clearly an over-reach..."⁽³⁾

France was still under curfew in March and entered its third national lockdown on April 3, the day before Easter.

Germany is also still on lockdown with some relaxation promised at 7-day intervals for shops and service providers but no word yet of relaxation for churches.

Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship issued guidelines for Holy Week, calling for return to "normal experience of Christian life through the physical presence of the faithful at Mass."⁽⁴⁾

Canada: GraceLife Church was "physically closed" by Alberta Health Services when authorities surrounded it with a chain link fence and blocked the entrance to the parking lot with police vehicles. The pastor, James Coates, resumed preaching on March 28, after being jailed for 35 days in February and fined \$1500, charged with violating health orders when he exercised his civil liberties by holding in-person services with the appropriate caution. "Now they've chained the doors of the church, enclosing it in chain link fence," said the pastor's wife. "This is all under the guise of a health order ... I pray for all the pastors and Christians that still think this is about a virus and health order. Clearly our Charter and criminal code mean nothing as long as the government can come up with a good enough story to disregard it. God have mercy on our nation."⁽⁵⁾

(irishtimes.com, 3/25/21(1), 3/31/21 cruxnow.com, 3/10/21; bbcnews.com, 3/24/21(2)(3); churchtimes.co.uk, 3/12/21(4); northstarmetingsgroup.com, 4/2/21; toddstarnes.com,4/7/21(5))

"When we worship together as a community of living Christians, we do not worship alone; we worship with all the company of heaven." - Marianne H. Micks, Professor of Historical Theology