



**Mennonite
Church
British
Columbia**

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November 19, 2020

To all MCBC Congregations:

Greetings as your congregation celebrates Jesus birth and contemplates his message to the world.

Garry Janzen attended an information session for BC provincial faith leaders this past Wednesday hosted by Premier John Horgan, Health Minister Adrian Dix and Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry. The provincial representatives indicated new enhanced restrictions on indoor gatherings would be announced on Thursday, Nov. 19th. The restrictions would not be a shutdown of buildings, but a focus on stopping events.

The new restrictions specify indoor events of any size will not be permitted in the province. This restriction would include indoor congregational gatherings of any size irrespective of the previous fifty-person allowance. Small gatherings less than ten following appropriate protocols that address addictions or mental health issues will be permitted. Day cares and after school programs are considered essential services and therefore permitted. Outdoor services with small numbers are still permitted.

There are several reasons for the increased restrictions including clusters of transmissions among faith groups, the virus lives longer and transmits easier in the winter, and the increasing number of social interactions. Due to the increase in positive tests, timely contact tracing has fallen behind.

Travel is discouraged unless absolutely essential, even for work. There was encouragement for church office staff to work from home in the next few weeks.

Andrew Haak, Level Ground, asked how faith communities could respond to the covid crisis. The provincial leaders responded in detail:

Reinforce that we are all in this crisis together;
Be examples of keeping spirits positive in challenging times;
Provide leadership and support to people in crisis;
Address groups of concern such as the elderly and young people.

May your congregation celebrate this season by embracing God's grace and mercy and by sustaining the blessings of Christmas with joy and gratitude.

Mennonite Church BC

Gerry Grunau
Moderator
[On behalf of the MCBC Executive]

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. 3:11