



March 5, 2021

Sent via e-mail to parishioners

My dear friends,

A few days ago, a movie scout contacted one of our churches to inquire whether the basement hall could be used to feed a crew of 50 people. “We have dispensation from the province and strict protocols will be enforced.” Later in the week, the priest presided at a funeral in the same church, limited to 10 people inside (including himself).

Which of these do we consider more essential?

I have been providing updates to you throughout this period of pandemic. We have also been working closely with the Government of Ontario to ensure that restrictions are respected as we collectively fight a virus that has, thus far, taken the lives of more than 22,000 Canadians.

I do not believe that our elected officials and medical officers of health consciously intend to suppress religious freedom; I realize that they are in an extremely difficult position. We do, however, ask to be treated equitably. In recent days, it is becoming more difficult to believe that is happening.

It is now appropriate for us to respectfully amplify our concerns. I am asking you to take two minutes to [write](#) to your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP). A copy of your letter will also be shared with Premier Ford.

The province has relaxed restrictions in Grey (Lockdown) regions, with retailers permitted to operate at 25 per cent capacity. Yet places of worship, regardless of whether they seat 100 or 1,000 people, must remain at a hard cap of 10 people. Next week, a funeral at St. Michael’s Cathedral (capacity 1,500) will be capped at 10 people, while around the corner dozens can enter the local liquor store and thousands will visit the Eaton Centre. This makes no sense.

I encourage all of you, whether you are in the Grey Zone (Toronto and Peel Regions as of March 8) or an area where churches can open at greater, but still greatly limited capacity, to respectfully [request](#) that any restrictions for places of worship use a percentage of capacity as opposed to an arbitrary number. This is an interfaith initiative with participation from many faith communities.

We are still in the midst of fighting a pandemic and we must be prudent in our actions. Our strict WorshipSafe protocols in our churches have proven to be effective. It’s time to address the growing inequities facing our faith communities. I hope you will [take a moment](#) to share your concerns with your MPP. I am grateful for your patience and perseverance during these most challenging days.

May God continue to bless you now and always.

Sincerely in Christ,

† Thomas Card. Collins

Thomas Cardinal Collins
Archbishop of Toronto