

Public Health Orders and Churches

The full current Manitoba public health orders, effective March 5, 2021, are available here: https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/proactive/2020_2021/orders-soe-03042021.pdf. The orders most directly relevant to churches are numbers 2, 19, and 27. The guidance around these orders from public health is available here: <https://manitoba.ca/covid19/restartmb/prs/index.html#guidance>. The following is the guidance most directly relevant to churches.

Gatherings

Outdoor visits of up to 10 people only plus members of a household on an outdoor private property.

Current orders prohibit gatherings of more than 10 people at an outdoor place or more than five people at an indoor public place or the common areas of a multi-unit residence..

Drive-in events are restricted to household members only, and people must stay in their vehicle.

Funerals can have 10 people in addition to the officiant under clear COVID-19 protection protocols.

Weddings can have up to 10 people in addition to the officiant and a photographer or videographer.

Outdoor physical activities for individuals and immediate households, including skating, tobogganing and skiing, are allowed. However, those participating in outdoor sports or recreational activities must maintain a separation of at least two metres from each other, unless they reside in the same household. Groups of more than 10 cannot gather unless they are members of the same household.

Worship Services

Places of worship can hold regular religious services if a service does not exceed 25 per cent of usual capacity or 100 people, whichever is lower.

Masks may be taken off while household groups are seated at a service, are appropriately distanced from other groups, and are not singing.

Masks

A person who enters or remains in an indoor public place must wear a mask in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin without gapping.

The operator of an indoor public place must ensure that every person who is not wearing a mask while in the indoor public place is given a reminder to do so as soon as possible following entry.

Masks are not required if people are seated at least two metres from others, or if there is a non-permeable physical barrier, such as a plexiglass barrier. However, people need to wear a mask at all times while moving to or from their seated position within the indoor public place.

In addition, employees, contractors or operators of an indoor public place do not need to wear a mask while they are in an area where members of the public do not normally have access, or if they are behind a non-permeable physical barrier, including a plexiglass barrier.

People who do not have to wear masks include:

- a child who is under five years of age;
- a person with a medical condition that is unrelated to COVID-19, including breathing or cognitive difficulties or a disability, which prevents them from safely wearing a mask; and
- a person who is unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person.

Additional Information

In addition to these orders, Michael Pahl met with other faith leaders in a roundtable with Dr. Brent Roussin, Manitoba's Chief Public Health Officer, on March 11, 2021. In this meeting the following was clarified:

- 1) **Sunday schools** may operate according to the protocols for "Day camps" (order 11); that is:
 - a. occupancy in all areas used by campers is restricted to 25% of the usual capacity of those areas;
 - b. the maximum size of a group of campers is 25 and no joint activities between groups take place; and
 - c. campers bring their own food and beverages or all food and beverages served at the camp are individually packaged.
- 2) **Church committees** are subject to gathering restrictions: 5 persons indoors, 10 outdoors.
- 3) Order 19 ("Places of worship") describes a single "**officiant**" who may be unmasked (19.1.c). This may in fact be more than one person at the front as long as they are appropriately distanced.
- 4) All **singers** should remain masked, including anyone leading from the front.