

November 5, 2020

Proposal to the City of Leduc regarding Places of Worship

Leduc City Council,

We want to express our sincere appreciation to City Council for their service to the community in what has proven to be very difficult times to lead. We have all had to make extreme changes to the ways we have done things just to be able to somewhat continue in our services.

We recognize the creation and implementation of bylaw 1062-2020 was done very quickly in order to allay public concerns. We also understand it is very difficult to consider and consult every public group and gathering to discuss the ramifications this type of bylaw could have on various groups.

With the first, second and third reading of this bylaw all taking place on the same meeting in the middle of Summer, when many of us were away on vacation, it did not give the faith community a chance to review and consider its full implications towards us and give our input.

It was unfortunate that we were overlooked in the consultation process as to how this bylaw would affect us and our ability to operate as normal as possible at this time.

As places of worship we have found ourselves in a middle ground when it comes to where exactly we land and how we would interpret the application of this bylaw.

For example:

Our services are very similar to the experience of going to the theatre where participants enter a lobby space and then are seated in a physically distanced seat where they can take their face covering off as long as they remain in their seat. This concession has been granted to theatres but has not been granted to places of worship.

Participants can enjoy a coffee or refreshment during the service at their seat similar to an experience at a coffee shop or restaurant (where face coverings are not required), but we are not a restaurant.

We have performances carried out on a stage that is much further away than physical distancing requires in an area not accessible by the public, similar to an athletic gathering, yet we don't fall under athletic guidelines.

Our earnest desire is to support and serve our community in a spirit of cooperation with City Counsel, but we are finding ourselves in a place where the carrying out of our basic services is being hindered. Hinderances that other businesses and organizations have been granted concessions, both at local and provincial levels, in order to continue in their function with minimized hinderance.

We would like City Council to consider creating an amendment that will allow places of worship to operate as other similar activities have been granted, so that we are not perceived as being uncooperative or in civil disobedience of local bylaws.

We would like to propose the following provisions be made in the bylaw or a statement issued by the city to allow the following:

1. In respect to Attendees that they be considered the same as patrons of a restaurant or theatre.
 - a. Wear masks while they enter, are checked in and while they are being seated.
 - b. Once seated, they can remove coverings as long as they remain physically distanced at their seats (as long as they are not singing)

N.B. – The recommendation of health agencies for the use of Face Coverings is as a way to reduce risk in the context of gatherings *where physical distancing may not be possible*.

The requirements of re-opening, as set forth in Provincial regulations for Places of Worship, is that participants must be seating in a manner that maintains Physical Distancing.

2. Stage ministry (musicians and speakers) – Considered the same as those participating in athletics.
 - a. Face coverings not be required while they are performing on a distinct stage or altar area.
 - b. Once they have left the stage/altar area coverings will be required.
3. For Children – The same protocols would be followed as required when they are at school
 - a. Wear face coverings until they are in their designated individual quadrant, facing forward.

We request that the City specifically address Places of Worship in such a way that our congregations know that we are working in cooperation with our City.

We thank you for your service to our community and eagerly await your response.

Signed,

Rev. Mike Prescott - City Life Church

Pastor Jason Dahlman – Ebenezer Christian Reformed Church

Rev. Landon Dorsch – Gateway Family Church

Rev. Tim Kerber – Leduc Community Baptist Church

Pastor Ed Allan – Daystar Church

Rev. Shannon Whitehouse – Leduc Alliance Church

Diaconial Minister Lorraine Schrader – Peace Lutheran Church