

Colorado Governor Declares Churches Essential

Colorado residents can head to church this Sunday and schedule events like weddings and funerals.

Gov. Jared Polis has finally dropped Colorado's unconstitutional limits on religious gatherings and declared houses of worship as essential. Effective Monday, he removed attendance caps on worship, which were imposed through the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment as part of its reaction to COVID-19.

Polis reversed course and took this action because of the Supreme Court's decision last week in Liberty Counsel's case of Harvest Rock Church and Harvest International Ministry in California and the court's ruling on Thanksgiving Eve in favor of New York churches and synagogues.

"Gov. Jared Polis is finally beginning to see the light. The Supreme Court has made it very clear that the courts and the states must begin applying the First Amendment to protect houses of worship. It is past time," said Liberty Counsel founder and Chairman Mat Staver.

On Oct. 23, Polis revised the COVID restrictions for churches from the prior 175-person limit to 175 people per room, not counting staff (with no limit on the number of staff). Now, the Third Amended Public Health Order 20-36 states, "Worship and ceremonies such as weddings and funerals are classified as essential. This means that they must do their best to follow public health recommendations but may exceed recommended capacity caps if they cannot conduct their essential activity within those restrictions. They still must require masks indoors and other prevention measures like six-foot spacing between members of different households and appropriate

sanitation. Outdoor activities are still strongly preferred.”

The governor’s decision also affects Andrew Wommack Ministries (AWMI) is a Colorado nonprofit charitable corporation and religious ministry that provides Christian and biblically based conferences, seminars, events and other religious gatherings. AWMI also has an affiliated ministry, Charis Bible College, which is a Christian college providing in-person and online biblical education courses.

Charis Bible College currently has approximately 652 enrolled students and typically has up to 200 more in regular enrollment. AWMI’s facilities at Charis Bible College can seat a total of 5,000 people since the main auditorium/sanctuary seats 3,100 individuals and the remaining classrooms and event spaces can host 1,900 individuals.

Liberty Counsel represents AWMI and has been litigating the attendance caps on worship in Colorado on behalf of AWMI.
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