

‘Coercive Approach to Public Health’: Church Doors Locked After Court Order

This past weekend, those who wanted to attend Trinity Bible Chapel in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada found the church doors locked against them. The closure came following a court order granted to the attorney general to lock the doors for one week after “allegedly breaking COVID-19 restrictions on a repeated basis,” *Kitchener Today* reports.

“The judge would only give them one week for now, and we will return to court next week to review the status and consider whether there are ways to keep other parts of the church available for the good works they do throughout the week,” said Lisa Bildy, attorney for the church. The attorney general had originally requested that the church’s doors be locked for the duration of the pandemic.

“It’s very sad that our government chose to take a coercive approach to public health, ignoring all prior pandemic plans and public health principles,” Bildy added. “It has not balanced the harms that come from lockdowns—from the failure to treat other health conditions, from the mental strain, from abuse of self and others, from lost livelihoods and lost reasons for living. Our clients offer hope for people struggling with these harms, and have endured a great deal of abuse and punishment for sticking to their principles.”

“Trinity is playing games with the court,” said Richard Ogden, speaking for the attorney general’s office in closing arguments ahead of the judge’s decision, per Kitchener CTV News. Arguments against the church included 75 pages of historical legal interactions that individually mentioned each church elder, including the pastor.

On Sunday, April 25, Waterloo Regional Police issued nine tickets to Trinity churchgoers, while bylaw officials also issued one court summons to the church and six to its elders. The courts will determine fines. {eo}

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