

‘We Have the Authority of God on Our Side’: Canadian Church Slapped With \$66K in New Fines

Justice Bruce Thomas has ordered \$66,000 in new fines against The Church of God in Aylmer, Ontario, after it held an outdoor service for nearly 500 congregants on May 16, 2021, reports CTV News. This follows fines of \$117,000 already levied against the church and two of its pastors on May 14 for allegedly being in contempt of the Reopening Ontario Act. After the May 14 ruling, the church was ordered locked until the province allows for indoor gatherings at 30% capacity, per Global News.

Canada, already in the news for its lockdown policies while the U.S. continues to reopen, continues to uphold restrictions against pastors and churches who attempt to stand up for their rights.

Police have filed charges against the church for outdoor services that have taken place on May 16, 23 and 30 after the church was locked.

Crown attorney Lisa Brost said the May 16 gathering showed an “escalated defiance” from church leaders, pointing to a video of the livestreamed service in which Pastor Henry Hildebrandt says, “I am not locked down this morning. ... [What]’ we are facing behind me are the locked doors that somebody thought they had the authority to lock, and we are here because we have the authority of God on our side,” Hildebrandt said during service.

Brost sought more than \$80,000 in fines for the Church of God, Hildebrandt and Wall, all to be paid immediately and asked

that the church remain locked until existing fines are paid in full.

“The burden of all of this enforcement has fallen to the church without any evidence whatsoever that their continuing to meet has caused any outbreaks or illness, let alone death, over the last year,” said attorney Lisa Bildy, who represents the church.

“Was there an order? Yes. Did the church have knowledge of it? Yes. Did they breach it? Yes,” Bildy told the court during the hearing.

“They met outside in open air rather than inside their church, but still that is a breach of these draconian and unprecedented restrictions imposed on the citizens of Ontario,” Bildy said.

Thomas handed down his decision and penalties immediately after hearing from both lawyers, noting that “There is a law, there is a court order, there are continued, brazen, self-promoting acts of breach.”

Thomas said the church may still appeal the order that locked its doors but added that “the court will take into account the fact that fines may or may not be paid in any subsequent application.”

All fines are to be paid immediately. {eo}

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