



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on April 12, 2021

UPDATE: Protestors Tear Down Fencing of Seized Alberta Church; Police Respond in Armed Riot Gear

“GraceLife Church in Canada is meeting somewhere, we don’t know where,” related veteran Pastor John MacArthur to his thousands-strong Los Angeles-based congregation on Sunday, April 11.

“Amazing to have an underground church in Canada,” he continued. “This because the Alberta government triple-fenced the church in and locked it so people couldn’t go there.”

MacArthur, who is in an ongoing legal battle of his own for keeping the doors of Grace Community Church open despite California Governor Gavin Newsom’s severe lockdown restrictions, received an impassioned letter from Pastor James Coates, following the April 8 [seizure](#) of GraceLife Church, near Edmonton.



YouTube

Pastor Coates did hold services on Sunday from an undisclosed location. Opening his [sermon](#), he said, “They can take our facility, but we’ll just find another one.”

It was Wednesday, April 8, when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), following directives from Alberta Health Services (AHS) and aided by private security companies, erected a triple-walled, heavily surveilled barricade masked with black tarp around the church building and property.

Coates, a graduate of the Master’s Seminary, which MacArthur founded in 1986, explained in his earnest message that “at this point, the congregation’s meeting location is not for the public to know.”

GraceLife Church is facing persecution for continuing to hold services in defiance of an AHS “closure order” issued back in January. Coates, who was [jailed](#) in a maximum-security facility February 16–March 22, was initially charged with multiple violations of the Canadian Crown’s Public Health Act. He currently awaits a trial date set for early May for a single violation of a health order.

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On Sunday, protestors who were allegedly unaffiliated with the church attempted to tear down the barriers. In response, more than 200 RCMP, clad in riot gear and gas masks, arrived on the scene, forming a human chain around the facility in a brutish show of force.

[Rebel News](#) journalist Sheila Gunn Reid, who has closely followed GraceLife’s story as the church has resisted the unconstitutional shutdowns over the past two months, explained in a Daily Wire [interview](#) that “the agitation was not because of anyone at the church.”

“What I can tell you is that most of the congregation was with Pastor Coates today, who was holding



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services at an undisclosed location off-site to avoid any trouble. For them, this is not about a building,” said Reid. “It’s about being able to gather in-person. That’s why they got in trouble in the first place for not limiting the congregation for 15% of fire code capacity.”

“A First for the Western World”

In the prelude to his Sunday sermon, MacArthur cited the 2,000-plus [deaths](#) attributed to the coronavirus in the Alberta province of 1.1 million, noting the majority of fatalities were among the senior population.

“There was no legitimate reason to do what they did to this church ... but they did. And this is a first for the Western world, to have a government lock out believers from a church, and that after imprisoning James Coates ... who was led away in chains and kept in a maximum-security facility for 35 days,” stated MacArthur.

MacArthur went on to read a letter of gratitude from Coates to the Grace Community Church congregation, voicing his and his family’s appreciation for the church’s steadfast support. The missive, in part, read:

Thank you for the way you cared for me, my family, and congregation during my imprisonment. Your love and prayerful support were vital to our steadfastness in the face of suffering.... You have suffered well for the Gospel and it is a blessing to join you in that suffering. Our congregations have been counted worthy for this purpose. May we rejoice in this as the apostles did in their sufferings. Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Lord over all creation and the Supreme Head of the Church. We will bow to Him, and Him alone.

A statement released by the [Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms](#), which represents GraceLife Church and Pastor Coates, outlined the stance of the church amid the recent closure:

Grace Life Church appreciates the public outpouring of support to fully open churches in Alberta. Grace Life Church congregants were not at the protest that occurred on Sunday, April 11, 2021 near the Church’s facility. Grace Life Church recognizes the place for peaceful protest within the context of a democracy.

Grace Life Church has no control of our Church or grounds at this time. The Church grounds are fully under the responsibility and control of the RCMP and Alberta Health Services. The closing of the Grace Life facility has understandably resulted in significant public outrage and caused even larger crowds to gather in one place. Albertans have a constitutional right to assemble, associate, and worship. By taking the measures the government has, while the matter is still pending before the Courts, the Alberta Government has created an even more divisive situation.

It is time to end these unscientific, unjustified and arbitrary lockdown measures.

As the story develops, *The New American* will continue to provide updates.

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