To Premier John Horgan, Health Minister Adrian Dix, and Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry:

As a member of Overcoming Faith Christian Centre Prince George BC, and as a part of the broader faith community of British Columbia I want to thank you for your tireless and diligent efforts to keep our communities safe and healthy amidst the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic. I recognize that it has created immense challenges for keeping your constituents safe and we continue to pray for wisdom and guidance. The purpose of my letter is to appeal to you to rescind the provincial health order to suspend all faith community gatherings.

It has been stated, by the government and the provincial health officer, that churches are an essential service, yet we are not permitted to function in one of our key areas of expertise and service to our communities. There has been very little conversation around the mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of people. It is well documented that all people, from children to seniors, are experiencing greater levels of depression and anxiety and the increasing risk factors for suicide. The faith community adds significant value in helping people cope in all of the aforementioned areas.

The greatest essential service that the faith community can provide is hope, peace, comfort and relationship. People need to be with people. People need an opportunity to express their faith in and worship of God with other believers. People desperately need hope in these trying times.

My church is committed to following all of the government protocols for the safety of our members. When we were permitted to gather with 50 or less, we never experienced any threat to our people’s health. I believe that gathering as a faith community will only strengthen peoples’ mental health and fortitude to continue to persevere throughout the remainder of this pandemic. I strongly urge you to remove the restrictions for gathering so that the church can provide the essential service that it has been recognized for.

Sincerely