

Pastor James Coates Returns to GraceLife in Edmonton, Canada – RCMP Try to Disrupt Services

[Pastor James Coates Returns to GraceLife, RCMP Try to Disrupt Services](#)

by [Sheila Gunn Reid](#), [Rebel News](#)

March 30, 2021

This past Sunday marked the return of [Pastor James Coates](#) to his congregation at GraceLife Church after spending 35 days in provincial custody for breaking public health orders that limited the size of worship services.

The church, just west of Edmonton, has become a flashpoint in the fight to protect religious freedom from government overreach and infringement during the coronavirus pandemic. Coates has openly defied provincial public health orders, preaching to capacity crowds where mask laws and social distancing are not enforced. His actions, which he described as obedient to God, prompted police and Alberta Health Services inspectors to surveil the church, issue a \$1,200 ticket to Coates, and then [arrest and charge the pastor](#) with an undertaking requiring him to follow the public health orders on February 7. Ultimately, Coates turned himself in on February 16 for breaking the undertaking, after holding non-compliant services again on February 14.

Coates was [released from custody](#) on March 22 and returned to his church this Sunday, although not to preach. He offered

opening and closing prayers while Associate Pastor Jake Spent led the sermon to a crowd that reached fire code capacity of 619.

As services began, two local RCMP officers and an Alberta Health Services inspector demanded entry to the church, something church elders argued would violate section 176(2) of the Criminal Code, which prohibits interrupting a religious services. A tense exchange between the two sides lasted approximately 20 minutes before police and inspectors left to monitor the service from off-site, after being denied access to the church.