

## Core measures for all worship services

- Consider developing a phased approach to re-opening. There does not need to be a strict timeline that each phase has to adhere to. One phase could last weeks or months before the church is ready to proceed to the next phase, but make sure you have a process in place for determining when to move onto the next phase or prolong it. Communicate clearly that plans may need to change depending on the health of the community.
- As much as we would like to be back in our sanctuaries again, please take the time to plan out carefully how to reasonably come back together without risking the health and welfare of congregants, staff, and everyone's families. Take time to read through these suggestions and take the necessary steps to ensure your sanctuary is as safe as possible BEFORE restarting scaled-back worship events.
- Be sure to communicate clearly that people should only attend worship services as they are comfortable. No pressure should be placed on anyone to participate in person.
- Take every reasonable step to ensure minimal interaction of people (including employees and/or clients) within two metres of each other.
- Take every reasonable step required to prevent employees and/or attendees who are required to self-isolate from entering places of worship.
- Develop and follow an exclusion policy that ensures symptomatic employees and/or attendees are immediately excluded from activities.
- Ensure enhanced cleaning and disinfection of shared areas and surfaces including but not limited to doors, handles, light switches, pews/chairs, bathroom facilities, etc.
- Be prepared to re-arrange worship spaces to ensure adequate space between individuals and family groups.
- Ensure hand washing stations or hand sanitizing products are available and accessible to everyone.
- Support engagement from home, wherever possible and feasible (e.g. using virtual or teleconferencing technology)
- Take extra precautions if you are at increased risk, especially those who are aged 65 years and older, have a compromised immune system, and/or have underlying medical conditions.
- Food and beverage service (Coffee hour) must be suspended at this time.

## In-person worship gatherings

- Limit the size of the gathering to recommended guidelines for your province or area, including staff and volunteers;

- Advise people who are self-isolating or with [COVID-19 symptoms](#) to stay home.
- Consider using an RSVP system so that attendees can register in advance to avoid over-crowding.
- Give first opportunity to attend worship to those who have no technological support or access to technology at home (ie, those who have been unable to take part in online worship over the past few months).
- Implement measures to reduce physical contact; physical distancing must be maintained at all times between individuals from different households.
  - No handshaking or hugging.
  - Seating should be arranged or marked to ensure social distancing (e.g. some rows of pews may not be able to be used).
- Remove all hymnbooks and bibles (and other items that are hard to clean and sanitize between meetings) and use projected images, readings, etc. Alternatively, email programs, etc. so worshippers can access them on their smart phones and tablets.
- Stagger arrival and departure times and use visual cues like floor markings to encourage two metre (six feet) physical separation through corridors and entrances/exits.
- Allot additional time at gatherings to allow people to organize themselves in ways that minimize close contact and touching surfaces.
- Members of a household do not need to be separated from one another, and may sit, worship and travel together
- Multiple people should not touch the same object, such as tongs, a microphone, a cup, a font, or collection.
- Any person who may be within six feet of another person outside of their household should [wear a non-medical mask](#), and practice hand hygiene before putting on the mask and before and after removing the mask.
- No congregational singing as this has proven to be a primary cause of transmission in church settings.
- Soloist, wind instruments, and/or brass instruments are permitted provided singers/vocalists, wind and brass players are a minimum of 3.5 metres (12 feet) apart from each other and everyone else.
- Microphones should not be shared.
- Passing the peace: People may opt to smile, wave, bow, bring their hands together in a praying posture, use sign language, etc.—whatever action feels comfortable as others acknowledge them in kind.
- No Sunday school or children’s programs should be offered at this time.
- Organizers should record, at a minimum, the name and phone number of one person per household and the number of individuals from the household present. The organizers must keep these records for one (1) month for contact tracing purposes.

- A variety of effective options may be found to reduce close contact and passing offering plates between people. For example, offering plates could be placed around the sanctuary and people asked to place their offering upon entering or exiting.
- Ensure people maintain physical distancing while counting the offering and wash their hands afterwards.
- Communion: Congregations should adapt their practices of sharing the bread and wine in accordance with the advice of public health officials.
- As at all times, the communion elements should be prepared in a hygienic way and environment. This includes limiting the number of people who handle the elements.
- Celebrations of Communion should be conducted in ways that allow for physical distancing and minimize close contact. Congregations can consult health authorities for best practices. Risk reduction measures may include:
  - Inviting worshippers to come forward individually rather than passing elements through the congregation.
  - Serving across the communion table as a way to reinforce physical distancing.
  - Having the server place the bread in worshippers' open, outstretched hands rather than having multiple hands come in contact with the plate or basket.
  - Offering small individual cups of wine or juice, and spreading them out around the service tray so that worshippers may take one cup without touching another.
  - Providing a basket or table at the side(s) of the sanctuary where worshippers may leave their cups after drinking.
  - Placing small portions of bread and wine/juice on a large table that provides ample space between each portion, for worshippers to take.
  - Use of a common cup is not permitted
  - Proper hygiene, hand washing, and disinfection of baskets, plates, trays, etc. should be exercised by all those cleaning up communion once it is done.
- Worship leaders should encourage people to take their time and exercise patience throughout the service of communion. Reassure worshippers that they may also choose to refrain from receiving communion in good conscience and without judgment.
- Where washroom access is provided:
  - Ensure hand washing stations or hand sanitizing products are available for use, and re –stocked as needed,
  - Frequent cleaning and disinfection must take place throughout the gathering, and

- Consider limiting the number of available stalls and urinals to discourage overcrowding in washrooms.
- Print and post signage outlining policies and procedures such as:
  - Physical distancing expectations,
  - Hand hygiene,
  - Respiratory etiquette (coughing and sneezing), and
  - Cleaning and disinfection practices and expectations.
- Print and post signage to notify individuals that they should not attend if they have symptoms of COVID-19, including fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, stuffy or runny nose, weakness, and/or acute loss of sense of taste and smell.
- Have a plan for the orderly dismissal of the congregation to maintain physical distancing.
- For example, have the last rows leave first, then second to last rows, and so on;
- Encourage ushers to direct the dismissal process.
- Open doors to reduce contact with door handles.
- Encourage people to leave the building rather than mingling

### Drive-in worship services

- The above guidelines must be adhered to.
- The organized gathering limit would not apply to individuals in cars. If organizers must gather outside to provide the services, the organized gathering limit applies.
- Only individuals from the same household may occupy the same vehicle.
- Singing in a car by members of the same household is permitted at drive-in services.
- Vehicles must be separated by a minimum of two metres.
- Individuals are encouraged to remain in their vehicles as much as possible.
- People leaving their vehicles must maintain a minimum of two metres of separation from others at all times.