



May 26, 2020

Moving Forward: Living Faithfully!

Recommendations to assist communities of faith in planning for the safe reopening of their buildings and in-person continuation of their ministries.

Each Regional Council is responsible for making recommendations about reopening buildings for its areas of responsibility. The governing board of each community of faith should make decisions based on the direction provided by their local public health unit, provincial health ministry, and regional council as they prepare their plans. Here are recommendations from Shining Waters Regional Council to guide your transition planning, acknowledging that COVID-19 has not yet been eliminated in Canada.

- [The United Church of Canada Reopening](#)
- [Ontario Government Reopening](#)

1. **Plan the work and work the plan.** Create a transition team to oversee the development and implementation of a plan. Communicate, monitor and adapt your plan as you move forward.
2. **Consider the most vulnerable** in your community first and make a plan that works for them (people over 60, those with underlying medical conditions that have weakened immune systems, and those who have family members at home).
3. **Prioritize safety.** The safety of staff, volunteers, church members, and all those we serve must be the core value at the center of our decisions about reopening for in-person activities. Ministry Personnel who are at risk and/or who have family members who are at risk should have a conversation with their Ministry and Personnel Committee and their regional council Pastoral Relations Minister to develop an alternate option where exposure to groups of people is limited and high-risk activities are avoided. Other staff with similar concerns should have a conversation with their Ministry and Personnel Committee. Please also consider the safety of key volunteers such as program leaders and Sunday School teachers.
4. **Reflect on your current experience.** Consider what you have learned about ministry and service in this period and what you would like to carry forward. There is an opportunity here for renewal.
5. **Keep gatherings low risk.** Wherever possible continue to connect on-line, or by e-mail/phone for all large services, meetings, gatherings. Events that involve people from different households coming together indoors for an extended time are a high-risk activity. Practice distancing and be diligent with

hygiene measures for any small gatherings/solo work experiences. Encourage all people to wear their own facemasks to lower the risk of transmission and have extra masks available at the door for those who don't have their own.

6. Continue to educate people to self-isolate. As things open up, create clear policies and practices to ensure people stay at home if they or any of their direct family members (or people they have regular contact with) are unwell.

7. Alter your Worship: When you return to gathered worship, alter your practice for the time being. No congregational or choir singing. Pre-record soloists and share the audio/video. No sharing of communion elements. No passing of the peace. No passing of the offering plate. No ushers or greeters. Minimize all unnecessary contact whenever possible.

8. Take thorough and deep cleaning seriously. Consider professional cleaning companies so that staff or volunteers are not exposed without proper PPE. Provide COVID-19 prevention supplies during services or events, such as soap/hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, hand-washing stations, tissues, and waste baskets. At least twice a day and before and after each gathering, clean and disinfect high touch surfaces such as doorknobs, countertops, bathrooms, backs of pews, microphones, musical instruments, and all other highly used areas. Have a plan for how washrooms will be used to ensure safe distancing.

9. Limit hospitality. Refrain from serving food or drink at gatherings. Eliminate greeting at the door and discourage social lingering after worship.

10. Include your tenants. Make every effort to ensure your tenants understand and are compliant with provincial guidelines and your own policies. Determine how you will monitor and what consequences will apply for non-compliance.

