



Re-Opening Check List Template for Communities of Faith

The Governing Body

The community of faith governing body has the authority and responsibility to determine whether or not to re-open the church for worship according to the laws and guidelines of the municipal, provincial and federal government. You retain the right to establish policies/procedures that are more cautious than the legislation, including the decision to not gather in person for worship services.

If the decision is made to re-open, it is recommended that a committee be established to consult with staff, members, public health officials, insurance, lease holders etc. and create a re-opening plan and policy for approval by the governing body. This committee could include representatives from M&P, Board of Trustees, Property, Worship, UCW etc. It would also be advisable to keep a record of the policy and procedures, including any dates of consultation with your local Board of Health, dated and initialled cleaning check-lists, how you responded to specific situations/concerns etc. to be able to show due diligence.

This document is a collection of suggestions and things to consider. It is **not** an official list or regulation, and it is limited to the date when it was written. It is intended to be adapted by communities of faith based on frequent consultation with the local public health unit to ensure it reflects current conditions and legislation for your area. Your local board of health will have information available on their website. This checklist pertains primarily to worship services, funerals and weddings. United in Learning has also produced two webinars on re-opening that are very helpful. [Webinar 1](#) [Webinar 2](#)

Remember "Faith community leaders /organizers are responsible for preventing the risk of infection among staff, volunteers, community members, and visitors who participate in their activities." Toronto Public Health <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/978e-COVID-19-Guidance-for-Places-of-Worship.pdf>

Staffing and the Ministry & Personnel Committee

Ministry and Personnel Committees have a vital role in the reopening of the churches. It is important to have a conversation with each employee. For some of your staff there will be a level of mental fatigue, especially for those who have worked to keep the Pastoral Charge operational, through worship and Pastoral Care.

With that in mind:

- Meet with all staff – virtually right now
- Ask how they are doing and how their family is doing
- Ask how this time has been for them
- Ask how they are feeling about returning to the office (if applicable) and in-person worship
- What learnings have they gained, what went well and what was difficult
- Ministry Personnel and Lay Employees who are vulnerable (over 60 years of age, or have compromised health) should work with their Ministry and Personnel Committee to develop an alternate option to limit exposure to groups and high-risk activities
- Ensure all staff have completed WHIMS training, especially those working with cleaning and disinfecting products
- Consider scheduling office hours to avoid having staff in the building at the same time.
- Clearly identify what areas will be used and need to be cleaned and by whom
- Ministry and Personnel Committees may contact Diane Blanchard, Minister, Pastoral Relations for advice regarding re-opening and staffing.

Using the Church Building

- In your announcements and in your plan you should advise any staff or congregants who are symptomatic or have been advised by public health to report their symptoms, to self-isolate and stay at home
- Post and share information about the symptoms so people can see what they are and know how to assess when to stay home (Fever above 38C, a new cough, or worsening cough, headache, sore throat, runny nose, fatigue, muscle pain, diarrhea, loss of sense of taste, loss of smell, and in children, purple markings on the fingers and toes) ([see resource 1](#))

- Notify all persons with keys that they cannot enter the church without permission.
- Post a sign-in and sign-out sheet including name, contact info, time in and time out and purpose of visit for all who do enter the building.
- Ensure a system is in place for contact tracing that will identify for public health officials who has been in the building for each day and event. For confidentiality purposes, the names and contact information can be sealed in an envelope and kept in a secure location. If not needed, it can be shredded after 30 days.

The following information is required for contact tracing:

- Name and phone number or email of the people who were in the building
 - Date and time that the gathering took place
 - Purpose for the gathering
- 2 meters is the required space required between individuals. Churches may need to measure and rope off areas where people cannot sit in order to maintain physical distancing
- If possible consider installing motion sensor switches for lights in bathrooms.
- Post signs to indicate which areas that have been identified in your plan as areas not to be entered or used. This might include coat racks, kitchen, additional meeting rooms or washrooms.
- Encourage staff and congregants to wear a mask when coming to church for any activity
- Encourage people to cough or sneeze into their elbow when necessary to limit possible contamination of surfaces.
- Do not use ceiling fans or portable fans as they increase air movement and potential spread.
- If you need to have someone operate an elevator, consider how to reduce exposure by facing away from others, wearing a mask, stepping out before others enter or exist to prevent walking past one another. Transport one family group at a time.

Cleaning the Church Building

Churches are required to have a plan in place for reducing contamination of the building and ensuring effective cleaning.

- Make a checklist for cleaning each space (see attached)
- Hymnbooks, pew bibles are difficult to disinfect. Best to remove them and all other items from the pews.

- Place hand sanitizer stations at all entrances and other useful locations. Make sure it is highly visible.
- Identify which washrooms are to be used, and if necessary have a volunteer available to limit the number of people in the washroom. Determine how frequently washrooms will be cleaned.
- Public washrooms need to be equipped with hot and cold running water under pressure, liquid soap, paper towels, and garbage containers. Handwashing signs must be posted.
- After each use the building must be cleaned with a disinfectant. All disinfectants that have a drug identification number (DIN) have been approved for sale in Canada. While most disinfectants will work against coronavirus, the following list of hard-surface disinfectants are supported by evidence following drug review, demonstrating that they are likely to be effective and may be used against SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. ([see resource 2, resource 7](#))
- Consider which products are suitable for special items such as antique wood, brass or silver finishes, fabrics.
- In some situations hiring a company to “fog” particular rooms may be an option.

Worship Guidelines

Worshippers

- Provide information regarding new procedures and rules prior to the service
- Designate one entrance and if possible a separate exit
- Post screening questions at the entrance
- Screen people upon arrival and record name and contact information
- If possible have entry doors held open or frequently disinfect handle (do not prop open fire doors)
- Provide hand sanitizer at all entrances and exits and other convenient locations
- Encourage use of masks, and have some available (may be mandatory in some areas)
- Pre-arrange seating to ensure social distancing by removing chairs or blocking off pews
- Have ushers available to direct people to seats, and if possible seat them in order from the front to the back to reduce walking passed one another

- Discourage conversation outside family groups
- Be prepared to turn people away once the 30% capacity has been reached
- Have people exit through a different door or by starting at the back as directed by ushers to ensure spacing.
- Discourage parking lot conversations unless physical distancing is being followed

Worship Leadership

- Enter in such a way as to avoid walking passed congregation
- If possible wear a mask or face shield
- Consider pre-recording sermon to reduce speaking in public
- Maintain physical distance with other worship leaders, musicians etc.
- Use a separate microphone for each speaker and disinfect after service
- Do not greet people after the service
- Disinfect any video or audio equipment, candle lighters etc used for service
- For a multi-point charge consider the potential for increased risk of due to the worship leader gathering with different communities.
- Hold a practice or dress rehearsal with all volunteers before the first service

Communion

At this time communion is not recommended as it is a high risk activity. Save this for future use.

- The officiant and servers must use hand sanitizer before offering communion
- Physical distancing must be maintained.
- Individual pieces of bread and individual cups are offered
- Servers offer the bread and cup to each person rather than each person taking from a communal plate or tray
- Each communicant places their empty cup into a separate receptacle
- Disposable cups should be used

Passing the Peace

At this time passing the peace is not recommended as it is a high risk activity.

- Physical distancing must be maintained

- Suggest acknowledging one another with a prayerful bow, a wave, a nod or some non-contact gesture that can convey the message of peace

Collecting the Offering

At this time passing a collection plate is not recommended as it is a high risk activity.

- Encourage people to contribute through online giving, PAR, E-Transfer, Canada Helps, or posted dated cheques.
- Place the plate near the entrance or exit for those who bring an offering.
- Provide gloves for volunteers handling cash or cheques and ensure physical distancing when counting.
- Disinfect adding machines, calculators, pens, computer keyboards or other equipment used to count the offering.

Singing and Responding in Unison

Singing poses serious risks! At this time singing or group responses are not recommended as they are high risk activities.

- There should be no congregational or choir singing, even with masks
- Soloists must be at safe distances from each other and from the congregation, and if possible behind a screen
- Singing from the balcony is NOT recommended.
- Consider using pre-recorded music
- Encourage people to pray silently or introduce gestures for prayer and responses
- If playing familiar music presents an irresistible temptation to sing, consider using this as an opportunity to introduce new hymns and music.

Baptisms

- For infant baptism, the parents should be the only ones to hold the baby.
- The officiant will sanitize hands before the baptism.
- Water should come from individual cups or a bottle for each person, not the common font. If possible, have a separate container that sits in the font for each individual who will be baptized
- If oil is used for a blessing, have the parent apply it to the child's forehead.
- Invite the parent to pickup and light the baptism candle
- Sanitize hands before preparing and signing the baptism certificate.

Weddings and Funerals

- Follow government restrictions for indoor or outdoor gatherings.
- Adhere to physical distancing and all requirements for a worship service.
- Provide hand sanitizer for use after signing wedding register.
- Have the groom carry the rings.

Other Uses of Church Buildings

Tenant and Rental Group Use of Buildings

This may not yet be permitted for your building. Check with your local public health unit and the Government of Ontario for lists of what businesses/organizations may re-open. Save for future use.

Tenants must have a plan before returning to your church. This plan should include, but not limited to:

- A plan for cleaning outlining who is responsible and what practices will be followed.
- If you expect your tenant to clean, it is important that you are satisfied that the cleaning practices are safe and consistently applied. Be clear that failure to do so will result in being denied access to the building.
- Tenant must maintain their own contact tracing list, and keep the information for at least 30 days.
- Advise them which entrance and exit and other rooms they are to use.
- Consider restricting access to a smaller space, installing locks if needed, providing separate storage space.
- Consider a clause in the tenant agreement to read that failure to follow health and government regulations may result in termination of the agreement.
- Ensure renters have their own third party liability insurance.
- If another congregation uses your building, ensure there is sufficient time for a thorough cleaning between services and time for one group to leave before the next arrives.
- Consider holding services on different days

Group Use of Buildings:

This is not yet permitted! Check with your local public health unit and the Government of Ontario for lists of what social gatherings are permitted. Save for future use.

This is for those who are one-time users of the building eg: baby showers birthday parties etc.

- Create a plan for these gatherings including what space can be used.
- Follow government and public health directives regarding size of gatherings.
- The church must assume all cleaning responsibility before and after the event.
- The group must keep a list of all people and contacts for those attending the event; this must be kept for at least 30 days.
- Consider whether church dishes and kitchen will be used, how garbage will be removed, what chairs, tables etc. will be required.

Resources:

1. http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_reference_doc_symptoms.pdf
2. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html#tbl1%20June%2017,%202020>
3. http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/advice_religious_services.pdf
4. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200052>
5. <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/978e-COVID-19-Guidance-for-Places-of-Worship.pdf>
6. <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/978e-COVID-19-Guidance-for-Places-of-Worship.pdf>
7. <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf?la=en>
8. <https://www.united-in-learning.com/index.php/webinars/recordings/346-congregational-programming-opening-our-buildings-may-28>
9. <https://www.united-in-learning.com/index.php/webinars/recordings/348-congregational-programming-more-opening-our-buildings-june-4-2020>

Sample Cleaning Checklists **Modify as Needed**

Entrances

- Door handles and automatic door buttons
- Light switches
- Hand sanitizer bottle
- Other
- Hand railings
- Chair lifts/elevators

Worship Space

- Pews (especially top of the backs) and/or chairs
- Microphones and audio/video equipment
- Musical instruments
- Tables
- All door handles
- Light switches
- Candle lighters
- Projector and remotes
- All other highly used areas

Offices (check with staff)

- Door handles
- Light switches
- Desk top and drawer handles

- Filing Cabinet handles
- Computer keyboard/mouse
- Telephone
- Photocopier/printer
- Chairs/arm rests
- Other

Washrooms:

- Toilets (inside, outside, handle and around the basin)
- Toilet paper dispensers
- Counters
- Sinks and taps
- Soap dispensers
- Paper towel dispensers
- Door handles
- Light switches
- Garbage receptacles
- Other

Signature and Date of Cleaning