

## **First United Reintegration During and Following Covid-19** (June 2020)

**This is a living document that reflects our current knowledge and our best guesses as to the ways we will be moving forward. It is based on guidelines and suggestions from the United Church of Canada, Western Ontario Waterways Region of the United Church of Canada, and various government and health agencies. It has been a major topic of discussion at numerous board meetings and has already undergone a number of revisions. It, and our actions, will change as we learn more about living with Covid-19**

**Some of what we now know is:**

- **Social distancing will be needed for a very long time**
- **Extra deep cleaning will be needed every time we meet and in every space we visit**
- **We will need to work hard to leave as small a microbial footprint as possible**
- **Singing will not likely be allowed in group settings**
- **Use of space will need to be carefully controlled especially for entering and leaving**

### ***Timeline***

*We still do not have a timeline for reopening for meetings and for worship. What we do know is that this will be a much slower process than the shutdown was and that we need to have patience and trust the guidelines of public health as they will have the most up to date information on safety for our whole community. The reopening will be in steps, and full corporate worship will be the last step.*

### **What was initiated as of March and should continue**

We are already doing the following:

- Extra cleaning, especially:
  - Hand rails
  - Door knobs and bars
  - Door opening buttons
  - Light Switches
  - Washrooms
- Hospital grade cleaner being used
- Hand sanitizers being checked and refilled
- Pews sanitized
- Paper towels installed in washrooms
- Bleach Sanitizer in kitchen better labelled with date of refresh
- Sign In sheets at the door – to continue for all meetings including worship when started

## **Initiatives at the start of reintegration**

We all need to be responsible for our part in:

- Education to let the congregation know what to expect
  - Email and other communication about start up should include the precautions we are putting in place
  - Ushers to be specially educated so they can direct worshippers once worship resumes
- Request that anyone who has been sick stay away until they have been well for 14 full days
- Mask wearing to be encouraged
- No physical contact when greeting
- Continue virtual governance meetings with gradual return to face to face
- Continue virtual Christian Education activities with gradual return to face to face
- No social gatherings including coffee before and after church
- Consider which online meetings worked well and if we might want to continue them
- Consider what other online services we might we offer in an ongoing way
- Only emergency home visits
- Hospital visits only when hospital deems it is safe
- No communion for the sick
- Continue offering home services and prayers for those not able or willing to attend in person

## **Resumption of Activities in the Building**

It is likely that small meetings will begin before full worship. Protocols to follow will be:

- Require every activity that is church sponsored inform the board of the safety precautions that they are taking
- Rentals we can ask to do the same. We might need to provide extra cleaning depending on the spaces used and the procedures of the group
- Office half door to remain closed to visitors unless there is a reason for the person to be in the office. (At discretion of the administrator)
- Check with insurance to ensure we are in compliance with any directives they have
- No use of rooms outside of your scheduled activity (kitchen, other meeting rooms)
- Only one person at a time can be in the washroom

## **Group Meetings**

When groups start meeting, we will still need to observe some rules to be safe. The following might be some initial suggestions:

- Limit size of group to the number set by public health guidelines
- No physical contact (Handshakes, fist bumps, elbow bumps etc.)

- Wear masks if you cannot maintain distancing
- Sit in chairs spread out around the meeting room (Not around a table)
- Do not switch chairs or move around the room
- Limit the rooms used or visited
- Do not share communal food or beverages. If desired for your meeting, each person should bring their own
- Rooms should be somehow marked to be cleaned after every group

## **Worship**

Worship will need to be very different from what we are used to. Some of the changes are listed below:

- No physical contact when greeting
- Bulletins will not be printed for distribution. Special requests will be honoured
- Bibles, Hymn books and envelopes will be removed from the pews
- Services will be designed for the full congregation (all ages)
- Offering plates to be placed on table outside sanctuary
- Sit apart at Church
  - Block off every second pew
  - Areas for families to sit will be marked and must be adhered to
  - The sanctuary will be filled from front to back, then emptied from the back to the front
- No physical Passing the Peace
- Use individual elements for Communion
- Community singing, including a choir, will not be a part of the service until we know it is safe
- Children and youth will remain with their families or on their own in the service until safe alternatives have been found
- There will be no gathering and no coffee before or after the service and people are requested to leave as quickly as possible to maintain social distancing

## **Communion**

It is not advised to serve communion until all of us are more used to the requirements of social distancing during worship. When we do:

- Use individual cups and bread
- Servers should be handing the elements out rather than participants taking their own
- Possibly incorporate hand sanitizing into the liturgy for servers, even if not part of the liturgy, servers should sanitize hands immediately before serving
- Have the participants maintain social distancing as they come to the front
- Consider ushers offering sanitizer as people leave their pews

## **Food Activities**

Food activities will not start up for quite a while as health departments and food safety experts are still figuring out what additional protocols will need to be in place. We will not be allowing food activities until those protocols are in place and being used elsewhere. Once they do, the following is a guideline of the minimum procedures we think will need be followed:

- Size of the gathering should be controlled
- A certified food handler must be a part of any kitchen crew.
- All guidelines of the health unit should be followed.
- Absolutely no home prepped foods should be served until all danger of infection has passed
- If meals are served, extra space needs to be provided to allow social distancing.
- Everything, including pots, pans, bus bins etc. should be put through the dishwasher to be sanitized
- Counters, stoves and other prep or serving surfaces should be sanitized once an hour and/or whenever being used for a new purpose
- Items that are left to go through the dishwasher should be well rinsed and sprayed with the bleach solution that is left in the kitchen.

**Questions and Suggestions are welcome and encouraged!**

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