

COVID-19 Operational Plan  
St. George Baptist Church  
June 1, 2020  
(Revised Nov. 25, 2020)



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## **Introduction**

There is no doubt about the fact that COVID-19 has affected all of us, causing us to adjust how we live our lives as individuals. It has also had a dramatic impact on how businesses and organizations operate, and the Christian church is no exception. Due to the risk of COVID-19 we have had to close our doors, which has meant that we have not been able to meet and worship together for the past several months. Although this has been difficult, causing us to feel disconnected from one another, we also recognize that it has been necessary to help protect our people, our community, and to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Therefore, as we look forward with great anticipation to reopening our church, we do so cautiously. We believe that as Christians, we are called to be good citizens and that we are to obey, as much as possible, those who lead and govern us (Rom. 13:1-7). We also believe that we are responsible for the safety and protection of the church body, which is why we are providing you with these guidelines and action plan for reopening. We know that we can rely on you and your support to follow these guidelines to ensure everyone's safety and protection. In putting together this Operational Plan, we have reviewed and followed recommendations from the Province of New Brunswick, WorkSafe NB, as well as other organizations (such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – CDC; World Health Organization – WHO). A copy of this Operational Plan will be posted on the bulletin board in the church, our website [www.stgeorgebaptistchurch.ca](http://www.stgeorgebaptistchurch.ca), as well as the church office for those who may wish to review it. Please contact Pastor Jason or one of the deacons should you have any questions regarding this Operational Plan.

Blessings in Christ!

Pastor Jason

June 2020

## **Action Plan (General)**

In discussing the possibility of reopening, 4 main options were explored:

1. Not Reopening
2. Reopening – 1 weekly service (Sunday); max. 50 people
3. Reopening – 2 weekly services (Sunday); max. 50 people / service;  
congregation divided into 2 groups – Group A and Group B with Group A attending 1<sup>st</sup> service, Group B attending 2<sup>nd</sup> service; groups rotated each week
4. Reopening – 1 weekly service (Sunday); max. 50 people / service;  
congregation divided into 2 groups – Group A and Group B with Group A and B rotating each week (i.e. Group A June 7<sup>th</sup>; Group B June 14<sup>th</sup>; etc.)

In the end, it was believed and agreed that option 4 was the best option since it seemed to be the more cautious approach. First, this option reduces people's exposure to contracting COVID-19 since each group is only attending service every other week, thereby minimizing people's exposure and risk of coming into contact with the virus. Second, this option causes less strain on our custodian and volunteers regarding cleaning and sanitizing our facility, particularly between services, by allowing more time throughout the week to thoroughly clean our building. We also recognize that none of these options are ideal as we would like nothing more than for all of us to be together at the same time. But under the circumstances, we believe that this option allows us to reopen with the least amount of risk to our staff, members, congregants, and community.

**\*\*Please note: Effective Friday, June 19, 2020, the Government of NB lifted the 50 person restriction for public gatherings. Therefore, effective Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, our Group A and B restrictions outlined above have also been lifted. All are welcome to come as long as physical distancing requirements are met.\*\***

Although we will be opening our building for our Sunday Morning Worship Service, the following activities / programs will **NOT** be reopening or resuming at this time:

1. Children's Church / Sunday School
2. Children's Worship Time during the morning service

3. All other activities and programs that take place in our church building, including activities and programs from community user groups
4. Our basement area (Fellowship Hall & Kitchen) will remain closed as well

### **Action Plan (Specific)**

#### **1. Healthy Hygiene**

- We want to encourage staff, members, congregants, and visitors to maintain good hand hygiene by regularly washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Permanent hand sanitizer dispensers have been installed throughout the church (one in lobby by coat section; one in Prayer Lounge; one in Fellowship Hall)
- We also encourage everyone to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Please be careful not to leave tissues
- Signs will be posted throughout the church as reminders (ex. lobby & washrooms)
- We also ask that anyone who may be exhibiting signs of infection to please stay at home

#### **2. Face Masks / Gloves**

- “The New Brunswick Chief Medical Officer does not recommend the use of surgical masks by people who have no symptoms of respiratory infection unless under isolation precautions as directed by Public Health. It is NOT necessary to wear an N95 respirator or a surgical mask if you are well and not exhibiting any symptoms.”<sup>1</sup>
- However, we still encourage people to wear masks during worship. Masks will be made available if you do not have your own
- We encourage the use of gloves as well, especially if contact cannot be avoided. Gloves will be made available upon request

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<sup>1</sup> WorkSafe NB. *Embracing the New Normal as We Safely Return to Work: Guidelines for New Brunswick Workplaces Re-Opening in a COVID-19 Environment*. Version 1: May 8, 2020, pg. 6

**\*Note: Effective Oct. 8, 2020, the Government of New Brunswick declared that the wearing of face coverings in most public spaces is mandatory. As a result, we require everyone entering our facility to wear a face covering in adherence to these guidelines.**

3. Physical Distancing

- According to WorkSafe NB, “Physical distancing is the most effective control...” of the spread of COVID-19
- Physical distancing of 2 meters (6 feet) must be kept by all staff, members, congregants, and visitors at all times while in the church building
- Certain pews have been marked and restricted from seating to maintain these requirements. Please do not sit in these areas
- We ask that you sit only with those who are in your “bubble” (i.e. family members & close friends) as per government guidelines
- Worship materials, such as hymn books and pew Bibles, have been removed to help reduce the risk of infection
- Words for songs / hymns and Scripture passages will be made available electronically (as normal)
- Other resources that are kept on the back table have also been removed. If there is something you are looking for, please ask
- There will be no “Meet and Greet” during the service
- Offering plates will not be passed around during the service. Instead, plates will be made available at the back of the church, allowing people to drop in their offering either before or after the service
- Giving can also be done through the church’s website [www.stgeorgebaptistchurch.ca](http://www.stgeorgebaptistchurch.ca) or by e-Transfer. Please let the Administrative Assistant (Marlene Gray) or Church Treasurer (Diane Thurlow) know if you have any questions regarding giving
- There will be no greeting by the Pastor at the door at the end of the service
- Members, congregants, and guests will be dismissed by section (sections A-E will be clearly marked) at the end of the service and we ask that everyone promptly exit the building, while maintaining the 2 meter (6 feet) physical distancing guidelines. Please do not loiter at the back of the church or lobby before or after the service

#### 4. Cleaning & Disinfection

- Cleaning & disinfection of the sanctuary (including pews) as well as washrooms, Prayer Lounge, and lobby area will be conducted by our custodian, Dan Allen, each week between services as well as throughout the week as necessary
- Offices (Pastor and Administrative Assistant) will be disinfected daily and after each visit by members and / or guests
- Desks, chairs, computers, light switches, doorknobs, etc. will be wiped down each day, as well as after each visit
- Cleaning supplies and other toiletries will be monitored by our custodian, Administrative Assistant, and Pastor to ensure an adequate supply is on hand

#### 5. Other Requirements

- We will also be keeping a list of names of those attending each service. The purpose of this is twofold:
  - (1) It will assist us in monitoring the number of people in our building at any given time in case of there are any restrictions in the number of people who may attend (Note: there have been times when the Government of N.B. has had restrictions and times when there haven't been restrictions. We have been monitoring our attendance in both cases so we can assure that physical distancing can be maintained at all times, regardless of whether or not there are restrictions)
  - (2) In case of someone being infected with COVID-19, we may be required to provide authorities with the names of people in whom the infected person may have come into contact (i.e. "contact tracing")
- This list will be kept in the church office **and will remain confidential** unless requested by government authorities

## **FAQ's**

### **1. How will the Lord's Supper / Communion be administered?**

We believe that the Lord's Supper is an important element to the church's worship. Since we have been apart for the past 12 weeks and unable to participate in communion together, we wanted to resume communion in our worship service. In doing so, however, we want to be as cautious as possible. Therefore, how we administer the elements will look a bit different.

We will not be passing around the bread and wine as normal. We will be calling on people by section (sections A-E) to come forward to receive the bread and wine. If anyone is unable to come forward on their own, their spouse or someone in their "bubble" can receive the elements on their behalf, or that person will be served (upon their permission) by one of the deacons who will be wearing gloves and a mask.

These instructions and other details as necessary will be clearly communicated each time we participate in the Lord's Supper.

### **2. If I am unable to attend on my group's designated Sunday, may I attend the following week with the other group?**

At this time, we are asking people to stay within their designated group and assigned Sunday. This is necessary because we must be able to effectively plan and manage how many people (50 max.) attend each service. We would not want someone to be turned away on their designated Sunday due to someone else attending on their non-designated Sunday.

We realize that special circumstances may arise, and we want to be as fair and flexible as possible. We have already made allowances for some of these special circumstances. If you have any questions regarding a specific request, please consult with the pastor or deacons.

**(Note: Further to the note on page 4 of this document, effective June 19<sup>th</sup> we were no longer dividing the congregation into 2 separate groups. However, effective Nov. 20, 2020, the Government of N.B. moved us (i.e. Zone 2) into “orange level”, meaning that we are once again restricted to 50 people in attendance. At this time, we have decided not to divide our congregation into groups because our average attendance since reopening in June 2020 has only been about 50 people. If our attendance begins to exceed 50 and we remain in “orange” we will reassess our policy.)**

**3. When will we be opening our church service so that there will be no need to divide into groups?**

Dividing the congregation into different groups for worship was never our desire. However, it is necessary in order for us to be able to maintain the maximum of 50 people allowed in our building at one time. We will continue to monitor any changes to the government’s restrictions pertaining to this issue and will make changes as necessary and communicate those changes to you at that time.

**(Note: see #2 above and note.)**

**4. What about other programs / activities in the church, such as Children’s Church / Sunday School, VBS, Bible Study, etc.? When will these be starting up?**

We will not be reopening any of our other programs or activities at this time. But again, we will be monitoring any changes by the Government of NB and make changes as appropriate. Our hope is that we will be able to resume these programs in the Fall of 2020.

**(Note: As of Nov. 25, 2020, we still have not reopened any of our Children’s Ministries. We have had meetings and discussions about this and plan to move forward as changes allow us. We do not anticipate any of these programs to be reinstituted until 2021.)**

**5. Will the services also be “live-streamed” or recorded and made available online so they can be viewed by people on their off week?**

For the first 2 weeks of reopening, we will not be recording or live streaming our service. However, this is something that we are strongly considering moving forward. We think that having our services available online is a valuable tool and we are strongly considering this option. We will communicate this to you once we have a plan in place.

**6. What allowances have you made for visitors?**

We want to be able to welcome all visitors to our church and not turn anyone away. Since we are not able to know who might visit or when they might arrive, we do not expect them to be aware of or adhere to our group designations. Therefore, visitors will be welcomed regardless of what group their name falls under. That might mean, however, that we will have to adjust our own groups in the future to accommodate visitors. If so, we will communicate this to those effected. But for the time being, we do not feel it is necessary.

**7. What about singing? Are we allowed to sing during worship?**

The changes announced by the Government of N.B. on Nov. 20, 2020 prohibit us from singing during worship.

## Resources

1. <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/covid-19.html>
2. Guidance Document of General Public Health Measures During COVID-19 Recovery (Province of New Brunswick)
3. COVID-19 Operational Plan Guide: Keeping New Brunswickers Safer Together (Province of New Brunswick)
4. Embracing the New Normal as We Safely Return to Work: Guidelines for New Brunswick Workplaces Re-Opening in a COVID-19 Environment (WorkSafe NB)
5. Interim Guidance for Communities of Faith (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC)
6. Guide to Reopening Church Services: A Step-by-Step, Biblically-Based and Research-Based Approach to Resuming In-Person Ministries (Humanitarian Disaster Institute)
7. Practical Considerations and Recommendations for Religious Leaders and Faith-Based Communities in the Context of COVID-19 (World Health Organization)