

Bethel, Emily United Church COVID-19 Re-Opening Plan

September 9, 2020

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

As Christians, our stewardship of the lives of those leading and attending worship, their safety and well-being, are a priority. People who come to in-person worship would have to respect instructions and support everyone in a leadership role.

All plans and protocols will be in alignment with Provincial and local health guidelines, United Church of Canada and East Central Ontario Region guidelines and in accordance with our context as a small rural faith community with a significant number of at-risk (aged) individuals. We are therefore taking a cautious and conservative approach to re-opening which prioritizes health, safety, and equity of access. We will take a phased approach to re-opening, keeping as up to date as possible with developments in this pandemic and adjusting accordingly.

PHASE 1:

The church board and committees (up to the number that can maintain physical distancing of 6 feet) may choose to meet in person. Staff and church board/committee members may access the building for cleaning, oversight, maintenance, office work, etc.

PHASE 2: OUTDOOR GATHERING/HYMN SING (Optional)

- Seating - Folks could bring their own lawn chairs and sit in their own family bubbles, the proper 6' apart.
- Access to the Building – no one would be allowed in the building except if they absolutely had to use the washroom, to be thoroughly cleaned before and after the service, and with proper sanitizing equipment available during. Signs will be posted on the way in and in the washroom reminding folks about hygiene protocols.
- Singing – According to Peterborough Public Health (September 9, 2020) “This guidance applies to both indoor and outdoor services: If an impermeable barrier is not used, anyone singing or playing wind or brass instruments should be separated from any other person (outside of the same household or social circle) to the greatest extent possible (but at least 2 metres).” We will continue to monitor advice from health authorities in this regard.
- Reservations – Folks will be asked to reserve a place ahead of time and confirm their contact info when they arrive (as per health regulations).
- Masks will still have to be worn in any circumstance where we can't keep 6' apart.
- Parents are responsible for monitoring little ones if they forget and get too close (one of the reasons it might be safer for more vulnerable folks to be able to stay in a car)
- No food and if folks want to say “Hi,” they will need to keep their 6' distance, no hugging or hand shaking, but we'll suggest a physically distanced bow.

PREPARATION FOR OUTDOOR WORSHIP:

- Measuring out of socially distanced areas (keeping family “bubbles” in mind) to determine the number of people who can safely be accommodated (with reservation system in mind)

- Volunteer to check off contact names, help folks set up physically distanced, provide masks if someone forgets theirs.
- Communication – email, mail or phone folks without Internet to let them know about the service and what to expect/what is expected, ask them to RSVP (this has the added advantage of gathering info on how safe folks might be feeling now about coming to church).
- In the event of a cancellation due to weather, we could use our existing phone tree and record a message on our voicemail so folks could call in to check if there is a cancellation.
- Order of service – We can send it via e-mail for those who are comfortable with it to print off at home and bring with them. Also set up a table where folks can pick up a paper copy of the order of service if they don't have email. Orders can be printed up a couple of days before and handled with gloves when transferring on the day of the service.
- Offering – a box with lid or some arrangement so things don't get blown away if it's a bit windy, and/or folks could continue to use PAR or e-transfer as they have been doing.

PHASE 3: WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY WITH PROTOCOLS IN PLACE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

PREPARATION OF THE BUILDING BEFORE OPENING:

- A physical assessment (walk-through) of the building as required by insurance documents and health authorities
- A thorough cleaning and disinfecting of the building: Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces (e.g. toilets, sinks, door handles, light switches before and after use of the building). All cleaning materials must be COVID-19 approved (e.g. a minimum of 70% alcohol for hand sanitizers)..
- Installation of all hand sanitizer stations, communication signs, and preparation of the physical space for physical distancing and other protocols.
- Critical supplies purchased including: hand sanitizers, soap, disinfecting wipes, masks (including extra for congregants who forget theirs), gloves, thermometers.
- Physical Distancing markings at the entrance to the church and for entering/exiting the sanctuary
- Post signage at entrances reminding people not to enter the premises if they are sick, been travelling, or have any symptoms associated with COVID-19

PREPARATION OF SANCTUARY

- Marking out of social distance (spacing lines, directional arrows) for entering for worship and leaving safely (1 way in, one way out)
- Hymn books and Bibles as well as all "soft porous" material such as envelopes and pew cushions to be removed from the pews.
- Block off every other row of pews in the sanctuary paying attention to staff positions, accessibility needs, etc.

- Weekly reservation system so seating/bubbles can be marked off. Seats could be identified with name cards. (Folks to know they may not be able to sit in their regular seat!)
- Schematic for seating and indicate names (where folks/bubbles are to sit)

FOOD SAFETY:

- No food is to be permitted to be prepared, served, or shared in the church building.

CONTACT TRACING;

- Note must be taken of who has attended worship and their contact info, and volunteers to check folks off on the day. Dated, checked lists would be kept in a large envelope and kept in a secure place in case the information may be required by the Health Unit for contact tracing. Lists to be shredded every 30 days.

WORSHIP PROTOCOLS:

- The offering plate will be placed on a stand near the entrance and exit to facilitate a touch free offering. We will encourage people to provide their offering through PAR or e-transfer to reduce envelope, cheque and cash contact.
- After the service, the offering will be placed in a plastic bag (gloves must be used) and placed in a secure location to count after 24 hours.
- The order of service will be projected on screen only.

Suspended Services:

- Communion, baptism and other close contact activities as advised by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- Children's time at the front of the sanctuary – and children's choir, Sunday School
- All social gatherings, including before or after the service, as advised by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- Food services.
- Indoor singing, as directed by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health

COMMUNICATION PLAN

Protocols/what to expect, etc, to be communicated to everyone beforehand through email/snail mail.

STORYBOARD: WHAT SUNDAY SERVICE WOULD LOOK LIKE:

Folks in attendance should have made a reservation, all will have had protocols communicated to them so they know what to expect. Congregants will be asked to bring their own mask to use in the building. Disposable masks will be made available for those who forget theirs.

Scene 1: Arrival in parking lot

Must wear a proper mask and keep 2m distance from the time folks get out of the car.

Signage will be posted at entrances reminding people not to enter the premises if they are sick, have been travelling, or have any symptoms associated with COVID-19

May have to line up outside Narthex and keep 6' distancing - One-way traffic only, no coming and going – 1 person in the Narthex at a time, plus volunteer screener

Scene 2: Narthex

1 greeter/screener to contact trace, ensure folks are wearing their mask, sanitize hands, 1 congregant in Narthex at a time (to maintain 2m)

- Screening may include
 - Gathering contact information for contact tracing - This information will be retained for 30 days and then shredded.
 - Doing a screening assessment? (need to check with Health Units)
 - Taking the temperature? (need to check with Health Units)

Q: How can we do all this so it is a welcoming thing?

Scene 3: Entering the Sanctuary

Monitor will usher them to reserved seat. They may not be able to sit where they are used to sitting. Members of one family may sit together, with 2m between their group and any other folks. One-way traffic only, mask on at all times, no coming and going. If use of the washroom only if absolutely necessary.

Scene 4: Worship Content

Expectations: Worship will not look like it did before the pandemic; the service will look and sound very different. There will be a number of regular folks who will not be there. Even if folks have been prepared, there may be feelings of loss and sadness.

Listed below are the initial plans for returning to worship. However things may need to change as things continually unfold and new information becomes available.

- The service length will be shorter to reduce exposure - approximately 30 minutes.
- Masks and social distancing must be observed at all times.
- There will be no choir anthem or congregational singing during the service.
- No spoken responses: read along silently as worship leader reads.
- The order of service will be projected on the screen only.
- We will not pass the plate - offering will be left on offering plates at the entrance/exit.
- Announcements at the beginning of the service (care and concern for others, please be respectful and observe the protocols) and the end of the service (to remind people there is to be no gathering in the parking lot, narthex or front yard.)

Scene 4: Exit Choreography

Must leave in a socially distanced way (with monitors to guide and remind folks not to get too close) through only one exit, no coming and going.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Continue our online and social media presence for those not able or choosing not to attend in-person worship.

IF ANYONE EXPERIENCES SYMPTOMS:

If anyone who has been on the premises is experiencing symptoms or risk factors related to COVID-19, contact public health for guidance

Follow all published public health guidance and protocols for identifying volunteers or visitors who may have come into contact with the affected individual.

If someone who has been at our church is diagnosed with COVID-19, we will be contacted by the Health Unit so that contacts can be followed up immediately.