The United Church of Canada
L'Eglise Unie du Canada

Regional Council 15
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Covid-19 Update October 4, 2021 (Nova Scotia)

Dear members of Regional Council 15 (Nova Scotia):

If there is one thing we have seen time and time again over these past 18-months, it is that things can, and will, change. We have seen incredible efforts from all of our churches in following the health guidelines, and at the core of doing that, is the call to love our neighbour.

Nova Scotia is poised to move into phase 5 (five) today, Monday, October 4th. This Phase is being described as the new normal, living with COVID. As of Monday, ***there will be no gathering limits*** for events hosted by a business or organization, which include:

- weddings,
- funerals
- and faith gatherings

As, I am sure, this will be a welcome change, there will still be those that are feeling anxious, we are being reminded that while we don't need to maintain social distancing from others, it's still worthwhile keeping a safe distance from people you don't know. This helps reduce the spread of COVID-19 within the community.

Masks:
Wearing a non-medical mask is required in most indoor public places, which includes places of worship and faith gatherings.

Proof of vaccination:
Starting October 4, 2021, you need proof of full vaccination to go to, or participate in, discretionary, non-essential events, activities and services that gather people together, including:

- indoor and outdoor events and activities like receptions, social events, conferences and training that are hosted by a business or organization
- indoor and outdoor wedding ceremonies and funerals (including receptions and visitations) that are hosted by a business or organization
- community meetings in rental spaces, or where the public may be present (like annual general meetings of businesses or organizations)
- training hosted by a business or organization (like driver training or courses offered by a business that provides training) and any training using a rental space.

Proof of full vaccination isn't required at faith services, but all other activities require proof of vaccination.

…2

For further understanding of this policy for our churches:
"Any activities held by a faith organization other than a regular faith service (such as daily/weekly service) is subject to the proof of vaccine policy. If it is a regular group with the same people then proof of vaccination can be obtained once and does not need to be done each time the group meets."

- A home-based bible study/church groups would be an "informal gathering" so no proof of vaccination is required but the maximum number of people allowed is 25.
- The rules for "faith services" apply to children's ministry that happens at church on Sunday morning.

Singing:
There are no restrictions on singing or music starting October 4, 2021, but Dr. Strang is encouraging faith groups to re-introduce these activities slowly and carefully. Congregations will be required to remain masked. The provincial COVID website https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/ will have a new banner on October 4th, linking to healthy habits for living with Covid-19 and preventing other common infections. Dr. Strang encourages all faith organization to focus on adopting these practices.
Note:
We are currently awaiting clarification on choirs being able to sing without masks while leading the congregational in singing. We will be in touch when we know more.

Cleaning:
I have been asked if we are still required to clean and disinfect surfaces. It is important to remember that viruses can live on surfaces for several days. Reduce the number of germs and your risk of infection by cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched areas, every day or after a service or faith gathering.

Hand washing and sanitizing is still an important guard against the virus. Washing hands often with soap or hand sanitizer when there is no soap available. It is important to keep hand sanitizers in areas around your church and offices.

Communion: (reminders)
- Congregants may be asked to bring their own elements (make sure you have some in a self-contained container in case people forget
- If you provide the elements, individual pieces of bread and individual cups are offered
- The officiant and server must use hand sanitizer before offering communion
- There should be only one server, who sanitizes their hands after serving
- Have the elements already in a sealed self-container so no one person has to serve
- Each communicant must sanitize their hands before and after partaking (Have sanitizer available)
- After communion, ask each communicant is asked to take their items from the pew and place in a receptacle. Use garbage receptacles to keep your cleaning staff safe.

…3

Baptism: (reminders)
For infant baptism, the parents should be the only ones to hold the baby. The officiant will sanitize hands before the baptism. For infant, child and adult baptism, water should come from individual cups or a bottle for each person, not the common font. If possible, have a separate bowl that sits in the font for each individual who will be baptized.

Visiting: (Reminders)
Clergy Visitation: Please make every effort to mitigate the risk to your parishioners. Please follow the regulations for the institution in which you are visiting. You may wish to protect yourself by wearing a mask even if it is not required.

For house to house visiting:
When visiting people's homes, wear masks, and sanitize before and after the visit. It is advised that you not visit multiple homes in the same day. You will need to keep a list of the homes you visited. People will need to know they have the right to say no to a visit. Please arrange the visit ahead of time (avoid just dropping in).

If there are further questions, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Sincerely,

Faith

Faith March-MacCuish
Executive Minister