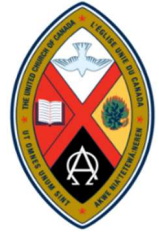




The United Church of Canada L'Église Unie du Canada



First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council
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September 15, 2020

Dear Ministry Personnel, Church Boards/Church Councils:

As many of you are aware, there were some updates from the health and government officials for Newfoundland and Labrador this week. I have maintained since the beginning of this Pandemic, “Just because you can does not mean you should”. In the case of congregational singing, I will reiterate the same sentiment. I would not encourage congregational singing at this time. Please note the Statement made by the Health Authorities:

Singing in faith-based communities (Wearing Masks)

- Depending on the age demographic of a group or congregation, considerations should be given to adapting guidelines accordingly i.e.,
 - Consider having one soloist or a small group sing for the entire congregation, ensuring at least 2 metres between the singers and the congregation (Masked).
 - Encourage humming along to recorded music or along with a soloist or small group of singers.(Everyone Masked)

If you are considering introducing singing to your gathered community:

I would recommend that if you have not already started back worshipping in your church buildings that you **not begin with congregational singing**. I would suggest a soloist or a small group of people to lead the singing as previously noted in the last correspondence. This will give the congregation time to adjust to church in the “new” normal and it will give you, as the leadership, time to get a sense that the congregation is taking your re-entry plan seriously and following your regulations.

If you have been back in your sanctuary and are happy with the response of the gathered community, and you decide that you would like to allow congregational singing, I recommend the following:

1. That you inform the congregation before you begin, so they can make an informed decision of whether they are comfortable being in a setting where there is singing.
2. That you consider the demographic of the congregation and whether the majority of the congregation is in the at risk category.
3. That the congregation maintain wearing masks for the entire service where singing is being permitted.

4. That you ensure that in your plan you include the regulations that have been provided to us by the NL Government, with respect to singing: [Guidance for Singing](#)

Please note:

Participants/parents/guardians are aware that returning to in-person singing and playing is voluntary and at their own risk.

Bulletins:

I have been ask about the production of bulletins.

If you have the capability of having your church service projected, that is the safest way to have congregational engagement. I realize that this is not possible for many congregations and there are passages of life in which a bulletin is important and becomes a family heirloom/keepsake/memory.

In such situations I would recommend:

- that one person who has worn a mask and gloves, produce and fold the bulletins.
- that the same person distribute the bulletins by placing them on the marked spots where seating is allowed with the distancing regulations.
- that congregational members be asked not to share bulletins unless they are in the same family bubble.
- that the congregational member be asked to take their bulletin with them or place them in the recycling bin on the way out of the church. (This will help protect your volunteers or caretakers)

Site visitors and drop in's

- Restrict the number of visitors to the workplace to only those essential.
- If people need to meet with the minister have them make an appointment and make sure the visitor and the minister wear a mask.

Use Virtual Meetings to Reduce Group Gatherings

- Use virtual meetings if possible. Reducing group gatherings and meetings is a key part of social distancing.
- emails, video group meetings, and one-on-one phone calls, are a few ways to reduce meetings without compromising communication.

The Special Measures Order for distanced gatherings does not apply to workplaces.

[Guidance for Gatherings](#)

However, in-person meetings are not recommended as the risk of transmission is increased in confined spaces with poor ventilation such as meeting rooms. It is recommended that meetings be done by video or teleconference, if possible, until further notice. If an in-person meeting is necessary:

- Set up the space to accommodate appropriate physical distancing (maintaining a distance of two metres or arms' length from others, front to back and side to side).
- Individuals must stay home if they are sick.
- Remind those that attend to practice physical distancing (no handshakes or hugs), wash their hands, and cover their coughs and sneezes.
- Ensure washrooms have sufficient supplies and a hands free wastebasket for disposal.
- Have extra tissues on hand.
- Offer Health Canada approved hand sanitizer (these often contain at least 60% alcohol).
- Do not allow sharing of food and beverages. Sharing food and utensils may increase the risk of transmission of COVID-19.
- Keep the front door open (weather permitting) to prevent people from touching the doorknob.
- Designate a person to clean high touch surfaces twice daily. The following link provides information on cleaning and disinfecting [Cleaning Factsheet-Covid-19](#).
- Indoor gatherings should occur in facilities with large rooms, not homes where physical distancing will be difficult to maintain.

Please also see the First Dawn Eastern Edge webpage for the PowerPoint [FDEE Emergency Response Covid-19](#) and the check list ([Re-Entry to Church Buildings Checklist](#)) for making your re-entry plan.

Also please see the government website for the Guidance for Faith-Based Organizations, [Guidance for Faith-based Organizations](#)

Reminder, your re-entry plan needs to be approved by your governing body (church board/council). If you wish to have the Region look at your plan and make recommendations please forward them to myself, fmaccuish@united-church.ca, or to our Regional Minister, Heather Sandford, hsandford@united-church.ca.

Faith March-MacCuish
Executive Minister