



The United Church of Canada L'Église Unie du Canada



First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council
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First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council Covid-19 Update **August 12, 2021**

Dear Members of First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council,

As you are now aware, as of 12:01am on Tuesday, August 10, 2021, mask requirements have changed. Masks are no longer a requirement for indoor public spaces. While masks are not required, they are still recommended for public indoor gatherings.

I have been asked some questions about whether it is permitted to remove your masks while in church? As masking is no longer required, but recommended, it is the decision of your local governing body. As I am hearing more and more concerns from other places in Canada where the numbers are rising, and as we are opened up to more and more travelers, I would recommend that governing bodies take the time to weigh out all of the facts when making this decision.

I would recommend that churches wait until the middle of September, after the high travel season, and after schools have had an opportunity to get started, before allowing congregational members to remove their masks when seated in the sanctuary. After mid September, if you wish, you could at that time have congregations allow members to remove their masks once seated for worship, and if you move from your space, masks need to be worn. In congregations where masks are permitted to be removed, it is recommended that only a small group or a soloist leading the singing.

Singing:

I am recommending that, if there is congregational singing, masks need to be worn for the whole service. This will protect those who are not vaccinated, children who are not able to be vaccinated, and it is also a help to protect us from any variants that might be appearing. It is important to sing for only 30 minutes during a one-hour service, so I would suggest the last 30 minutes of the service to have congregational singing. Please see the guidelines below.

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/life-during-covid-19/events/group-singing-and-wind-instrument-playing/>

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For Faith-Based Gatherings, continue to:

- Maintain physical distancing between all individuals including congregants, ushers, greeters, officiant, etc. (people from the same household or pre-determined close social group do not have to keep physical distance.)
- Adjust seating arrangements to allow physical distancing.
- Traditional greetings, such as handshakes and hugs, should be avoided.
- Ceremonial traditions that involve sharing of items or close contact should be altered to maintain a 2 metre/6 foot separation.
- Instructional settings for children (e.g. Sunday school) should follow the applicable guidelines for day camps. Please see the guidelines sent out by Catherine Stuart.
- Baptism - Separate bowls of water for each Baptism, have the parents hold the child, use a shell for pouring water, sanitize your hands before baptism etc.
- Communion – Individual packaged communion elements.
- Provide hand sanitizer at the entry and throughout the facility.
- Perform hand hygiene before and after handling items that might be shared.

Food:

Providing food and beverages after faith-based activities or events can occur if physical distancing and good hand hygiene practices are followed. No self-serve areas. Designated individuals to serve food and beverages is recommended while maintaining physical distancing and wearing non-medical masks. Food and beverages should not be shared.

Small Group Instruction/Meetings:

Small group, instructional settings and meetings for adults (e.g., bible study) must follow physical distancing.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to be in touch at fmaccuish@united-church.ca or at 1-800-268-3781 ext. 6156.

Sincerely,

Faith

Faith March-MacCuish
Executive Minister

August 12, 2021