



## In-Person Worship in The Synod of Alberta and the Territories June 12, 2020

As Alberta is now moving into Stage Two of its Relaunch Strategy, this will be the synod's final sample checklist as a help to preparation and planning for returning to in-person worship. Going forward, congregations are encouraged to watch for provincial updates and follow all current information and guidance, which will be posted on the synod website and is available through

<https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-information.aspx>

[https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx - FAQ](https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx-FAQ)

The province's June 9 Guidance for Places of Worship still advises: "To best prevent the spread of COVID-19 among attendees, places of worship are encouraged to continue hosting services and faith-based activities online or through creative mechanisms such as drive-in services. While in-person gatherings are permitted, in-person social gatherings that normally occur before and after a service (e.g. communal dinners and lunches) should be avoided at this time."

(<https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-relaunch-guidance-places-of-worship.pdf>)

It continues to be Bishop Larry's strong recommendation that our synod's congregations not gather for in-person worship at this time. Congregations are encouraged to form a team to intentionally prepare and plan for in-person worship. Congregations are also encouraged to contact their insurer directly to receive in writing information regarding COVID-related liability specific to the congregation's policy.

### **Where two meters of distance can be maintained between attendees not from the same household or cohort family, these are the current capacity restrictions:**

- Worship services: no capacity cap
- Wedding and funeral ceremonies (seated): maximum of 100 people
- Outdoor gatherings: maximum of 100 people
- Indoor social gatherings (e.g., wedding or funeral receptions): maximum of 50 people

Faith-based activities include all church services, activities, and events; the guidelines are intended for all such activities that occur on property owned or rented by religious groups. Organizers must follow all public health guidance and revise procedures as needed to keep everyone, especially the most vulnerable, safe.

*The organizer at a place of worship is responsible for preventing the risk of transmission of infection among any staff, volunteers, and members of the public who enter the place of worship to participate in faith-based activities. They are also responsible for protecting those who support day-to-day operations in the place of worship (e.g., administrative staff, cleaning, staff, and contractors).*

Activities that increase the risk of COVID-19 through contact/touch or respiratory droplet transmission should be discontinued or altered. Examples are social events with shared meals or refreshments, singing, and live performances of music, drama, or dance.

**A Sample Checklist to Assist in Planning In-Person Worship  
in The Synod of Alberta and the Territories  
June 12, 2020**

	Person Responsible	Done
<b>Preparing the facility</b>		
Clean and disinfect high-touch/shared surfaces such as doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, faucets and taps, elevator buttons, railings.		
Designate separate entrance and exit with signage, where feasible.		
Place hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol content at the entrance and exit and throughout the facility. If Holy Communion will be celebrated, have hand sanitizer available for worshipers as they proceed to the table. Supervise young children's access to sanitizer.		
Put up <a href="#">posters</a> educating worshipers about COVID-19 and entrance restrictions, distancing protocols, handwashing procedures, etc.		
Post facility-specific rules for participating in activities.		
Determine whether your usual worship space is the best place for worship at this time. Perhaps you have a fellowship hall that is larger and more suitable just now.		
Clearly indicate the route worshipers are to use from the entry to the worship space and indicate proper physical distancing, perhaps with markers on the floor. Consider controlling and staggering entry into and exit from worship or events (e.g., dismissing by household or section, rather than all at once).		
Close common areas.		
Close rooms that will not be in use.		
Remove all shared items such as brochures and hymnals, and any soft surfaces such as children's busy bags and stuffed animals.		
To indicate proper physical distancing, rearrange chairs or rope off every second row.		
Ensure that worship leaders will have appropriate physical distance from each other and will have their own microphones.		
Place floor indicators to show physical distance for those who are waiting to receive Holy Communion.		
Designate how many people will be allowed in a washroom at one time; post a sign with floor indicators in the hallway to show physical distance for those who are waiting.		
Provide non-medical masks for staff and volunteers, especially any who may be unable to maintain two-meter distance from attendees.		
Consider offering drive-by/through services in which households or cohort families participate without leaving their cars. Anyone leaving a vehicle or approaching the occupants should follow all the other requirements regarding hygiene, distance, and masks.		

	Person Responsible	Done
<b>Preparing Worshipers</b>		
Communicate that staff, volunteers and worshipers who are ill or have any common COVID-19 symptoms (cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat) must not attend. Encourage everyone to use the <a href="#">online self-screening tool</a> before each gathering.		
Communicate that individuals who have travelled internationally in the last 14 days, and individuals who have had close contact with confirmed COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days are prohibited by law from entering the place of worship.		
Communicate that those with underlying medical conditions and those over 65 years old are at a higher risk of experiencing worse symptoms than others if they contract the virus.		
Communicate changes to entrances/exits and worship space.		
Communicate that worshipers are asked to keep physical distance at all times and practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (cough and sneeze into their elbows or a tissue that can be discarded into a lined garbage bin, and washing hands afterwards).		
Children are to remain with their parents at all times.		
Communicate changes to the worship service in advance (e.g., no congregational singing, reception of Holy Communion, no greeting or coffee hour before or after service).		
<b>Preparing to Worship</b>		
The number of people allowed in the worship space with the necessary 2-meter physical distancing between households and family cohorts is determined.		
A plan is in place to determine how many services will be offered in order to accommodate those who would wish to worship.		
A plan is in place to determine who will worship when. Consider establishing an RSVP system for specific events.		
A plan is in place to offer remote participation for those who will not attend in person (e.g., video, audio recordings, phone, closed-circuit radio)		
Extra precautions are in place for higher risk individuals who do attend in person, such as designating times for individual worship or encouraging mask use for anyone who will be near them.		
A list with contact information is kept of attendees, staff and volunteers at all services in case someone later tests positive for COVID-19 and their movements must be traced. As providing personal information is voluntary, individuals must consent and be notified of the purpose and legal authority of its collection. The information will be kept secure for two weeks before it will be destroyed or deleted. In case of an on-site exposure, all attendees will be notified of their possible exposure and lists shared with Alberta Health Services.		

	Person Responsible	Done
Worship is planned in accordance with current public health guidelines.		
Congregants are reminded to clean their hands on entry and exit.		
All attendees are encouraged to wear face non-medical face masks.		
A plan is in place to help worshipers participate in the service. A single-use bulletin is left on chairs or pews AND/OR the bulletin is projected on a screen or available online.		
Congregational singing is considered high risk and is therefore discouraged. Recorded or streamed music may be played. Attendees may be invited to hum along.		
Soloists or instrumentalists may provide music following recommendations for safe distancing and/or barriers. Ideally, they will be completely separated by livestreaming each musician individually. If this is not possible, recommended precautions include limiting the number of singers to the fewest possible, facing away from others, creating separation with barriers like Plexiglas, and wearing non-medical masks.		
Church music ensembles who wish to practice or perform together should explore virtual rehearsals or recording sessions.		
Children will remain with their parents, even if a children's time is offered. Children under two years old should be held by their family.		
The Peace is shared without physical contact.		
The offering plate is neither circulated nor presented at the altar. There is a plan to receive gifts safely. Encourage worshipers to make contributions through electronic means.		
A plan is in place to offer the sacraments safely.		
People are designated to clean and disinfect the worship space between services.		
<b>Holy Communion</b>		
Those preparing the elements and vessels for Holy Communion use excellent hygiene procedures.		
Pastors and assistants wash and sanitize their hands before blessing the elements and distributing Holy Communion.		
If the presiding minister has underlying health conditions (although not sick) or is otherwise vulnerable, they may have an assistant distribute Holy Communion.		
Pastors and assistants wear a non-medical mask when distributing Holy Communion. Communicants are advised to also wear a non-medical mask.		
Pastors and assistants do not wear gloves when distributing Holy Communion.		
Worshipers are directed to servers in an organized fashion, leaving physical distance between family groups.		

	Person Responsible	Done
Communicants sanitize their hands as they proceed to the table.		
It is recommended that to minimize close contact, the communicant may pause two metres away from the minister, who says, “The body of Christ,” to which the response “Amen” is given. The minister should take special care not to touch the communicant, or should pause to wash hands again, if necessary.		
Communion in one kind is recognized as a full experience of the Sacrament. Consider offering bread only.		
Wafers or gluten-free crackers require less handling than bread.		
Common cup and intinction are not permitted.		
If wine or grape juice is offered, it must be distributed in individual glasses, with enough room around each that worshipers touch only their own glass. Communionware should not be passed between congregants.		
Worshipers are directed back to their seats in an organized fashion, leaving physical distance between family groups.		
Pastors and assistants wash and sanitize their hands after distribution.		
<b>Holy Baptism</b>		
The font is sanitized and filled with clean water.		
The person to be baptized, if an infant, remains in the arms of their family.		
Family groups at the font maintain physical distance.		
The pastor wears a non-medical mask at the font.		
Water is poured on the baptized with a shell.		
The baptized is anointed with oil in a cotton ball.		
A member of the baptismal party lights the baptismal candle from the paschal candle as the words of presentation are said.		
<b>Weddings and Funerals</b>		
Outdoor gatherings of up to 100 people practising physical distancing are permissible.		
Indoor wedding and funeral ceremonies are limited to 100 people.		
Weddings and funeral ceremonies held within the church building must follow the same guidelines as other worship services.		
<b>General</b>		
Staff and volunteers receive information and training about new processes.		
Staff and volunteers have access to non-medical masks and hand sanitizer.		
Offering counters have access to gloves. Touching of offerings should be minimized for the first 24 hours.		
People are designated to clean and sanitize high traffic areas, including washrooms, between services.		

	Person Responsible	Done
Leaders remain aware of new Public Health guidelines. Be prepared to discontinue in-person worship if levels of infection rise.		
<b>Renters/Outside Groups</b>		
Congregations may permit outside groups to use the facility providing they follow all health guidelines regarding physical distancing, etc., and the congregation/rental groups have resources to handle the cleaning requirements between each use. Facility rentals should be suspended if groups cannot or will not adhere to gathering restrictions.		
The operator is responsible for ensuring that renters have plans and mechanisms to prevent infection transmission. Consider requesting written details as to how the rental group will meet health guidelines, prior to their use of the facility.		