

To: All ECORC Communities of Faith

INVITATION TO RISK ASSESSMENT

As of Friday, June 12, 2020, much of the ECORC will be in Phase 2 of the COVID-19 reopening. Simultaneously, the Province of Ontario has allowed in-person religious gatherings to resume. Many jumped at the announcement, believing the only requirement was a reduced seating capacity. This is **NOT** the case.

The Province of Ontario has issued guidance documents that will govern the return to in-person worship as well as documents respecting offices and general workplace requirements. The documents represent the minimum legal standards which communities of faith must follow. Communities of faith will be held legally responsible for following these standards, and the failure to follow them may result in fines and other penalties.

Once these restrictions are taken, communities of faith are likely to find that their ability to accommodate worshippers in-person will be lower than the 30% maximum.

We strongly encourage you not to resume in-person worship until you have adequately worked through the risk assessment. Remember, should you have an outbreak, members of your community of faith could become very ill or die. In case of an outbreak, your actions will face media scrutiny. Failure to have adequately assessed the risk and created a plan, may open you to legal liability and void your insurance coverage.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- What are the values and principles that inform our decision to restart in-person ministries?
- What is the need to which we are trying to respond, by opening in-person ministries?

- In what ways are we still “open” even though the building is closed?
- In what ways are we still feeling “closed”?
- Are there reasons we should postpone reopening in-person ministries?
- What about in-person events that are limited to 10 people (e.g. AA meetings)?
- Do we have the resources (financial, human, etc.) to adequately manage the risks?

Prior to hosting in-person worship services, the governing bodies of communities of faith must approve plans to ensure:

- Clergy, staff and congregational safety
- Compliance with all Public Health directives
- Accessibility with Public Health recommended cleaners. and equality

ITEMS TO INCLUDE IN PLANS

Prior to opening for in-person worship and meetings/events

- Ensure cleaning of all touch services with appropriate cleaning products.
- Ensure all church facilities are in working order
- Confirm on-line capabilities to provide worship for those unable to attend in person
- Erect required signage communicating public health messages and requirements.
- Prepare a plan for the maximum capacity of the space, adhering to physical distancing (2 m) rule.
- Identify single point of entry and one-way movement through the building (prevent entry from other doors)

- Ensure physical distancing is maintained at all times and that participants do not engage in touch activities.
- Provide screening questionnaires and messages,
- Provide and require use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizing station or appropriate hand washing station.
- Distribute masks to all participants, and ensure they are worn while in the building.
- Register all attendees and collect contacting information to facilitate contact tracing.
- Limit access to other areas of the building.

Considerations Before/After and During Worship

- No Passing of the Peace involving handshakes or other types of touch.
- No congregational singing
- No gathering of the offering through the passing of a receptacle (plate, bucket, basket)
- No invitation to children to gather in the worship space.
- No nursery or children's program, unless public health measures for daycares are being followed.
- Remove all hymnbooks, bibles and other items from pews/seats
- Worship leaders maintain physical distance (2 m) from each other and use separate microphones
- Provision of required technology for home viewing of service
- No fellowship times or sharing of food/beverages

Cleaning

- Clean of all high touch areas including doors, pews, alter, pulpit, lectern, microphones, musical instruments etc. with Public Health recommended cleaners.
- Clean all washrooms with Public Health recommended cleaners.
- Clean all spaces used during worship with Public Health recommended cleaners.
- Document the date/time that cleaning took place

Other Uses/Users

- Ensure all tenants and renters are aware of your pandemic related reequipments and have written agreement to abide by requirements.
- Keep a log of all persons who enter the building at other times, including date/time and contact information.

REFERENCES/RESOURCES

GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO

General resources <https://www.ontario.ca/page/resources-prevent-covid-19-workplace>

Guidance on Health and Safety for Office Administration and Secretarial Staff during COVID-19

<https://www.wsps.ca/WSPS/media/Site/Resources/Downloads/covid-19-office-admin-health-and-safety-guidance.pdf?ext=.pdf>

Guidance on Health and Safety for Places of Worship During COVID-19

<https://d1ow5xpiphy0w2p.cloudfront.net/common/covid-19-worship-places-health-and-safety-guidance.pdf?mtime=20200609144243&focal=none>

OTHER RESOURCES

“Discerning “re-opening””: A conversation and planning process for Living Skies Regional Council” <https://livingskiesrc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/DiscerningRe-openingTogether-Living-SkiesRC-UCC.pdf>

Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers (COVID-19): List of disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID-19
<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>

“Reopening Churches during Covid-19”, United Church of Canada.
<https://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/reopening-churches-during-covid-19>

United in Learning Reopening Webinars’s: Note, both webinars have links to helpful documents. <https://www.united-in-learning.com/index.php/webinars/recordings/346-congregational-programming-opening-our-buildings-may-28>

<https://www.united-in-learning.com/index.php/webinars/recordings/348-congregational-programming-more-opening-our-buildings-june-4-2020>