



CANADIAN SHIELD
REGIONAL COUNCIL
The United Church of Canada

Moving Forward: Living Faithfully!

Planning for the Future

Recommendations to assist communities of faith in the *future* planning for the safe reopening of their buildings and in-person continuation of their ministries.

Each Regional Council is responsible for making recommendations about reopening buildings for its areas of responsibility. **When the time comes**, the governing board of each community of faith should make **reopening decisions based on the direction provided by their local public health unit, provincial health ministry, and regional council** as they prepare their plans. *Click on these links for more information:*

[The United Church of Canada Reopening](#) [Ontario Government Reopening](#)

Here are recommendations from the **Canadian Shield Regional Council** to guide your transition planning, acknowledging that COVID-19 has not yet been eliminated in Canada:

NOTE: AS OF OCTOBER 25TH, 2021, THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN CHURCHES THE OPTION TO LIFT CAPACITY LIMITS AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING REQUIREMENTS IF THEY CHOOSE TO REQUIRE PROOF OF VACCINATION. YOU MUST STILL WEAR YOUR MASKS.

- 1. Plan the work and work the plan.** Create a transition team to oversee the development and implementation of a plan. Communicate, monitor, and adapt your plan as you move forward.
- 2. Consider the most vulnerable** in your community first and make a plan that works for them (people over 60, those with underlying medical conditions that have weakened immune systems, and those who have family members, children included, at home).
- 3. Prioritize safety.** The safety of staff, volunteers, church members, and all those we serve must be the core value at the center of our decisions about reopening for in-person activities. Ministry Personnel who are at risk and/or who have family members who are at risk should have a conversation with their Ministry and Personnel Committee and their regional council Pastoral Relations Minister to develop an alternate option where exposure to groups of people is limited and high-risk activities are avoided. Other staff with similar concerns should have a conversation with their Ministry and Personnel Committee. Please also consider the safety of key volunteers such as program leaders and Sunday School teachers.
- 4. Reflect on your current experience.** Consider what you have learned about ministry and service in this period and what you would like to carry forward. There is an opportunity here for renewal.

5. **Keep gatherings low risk.** Practice distancing and be diligent with hygiene measures for any small gatherings/solo work experiences (see NOTE at the beginning of this document re: physical distancing). All people **must** still wear their own facemasks to lower the risk of transmission and have extra masks available at the door for those who don't have their own.

6. **Contact Tracing.** Contact tracing is a process that is used to identify individuals who have had close contact with someone who is infected with the virus. **There should be a sign-in sheet for every person who comes into your building, include the name, date, and contact information for each person.** This will help your local health unit identify possible spread if someone who attends your church has come into contact with someone with Covid-19. If someone has come into your church who has Covid-19 or has come into contact with someone who is suspected/confirmed to have Covid-19, you will need to contact everyone on your lists and self-quarantine may be required.

7. **Continue to educate people to self-isolate.** As things open up, create clear policies and practices to ensure people stay at home if they or any of their direct family members (or people they have regular contact with) are unwell.

8. **Alter your Worship (singing):** When you return to gathered worship, alter your practice for the time being. **Congregational/choir/solo singing – this may be changing depending on where we are in the Pandemic. Please contact your local health unit and the provincial government mandates for information on singing.**

9. **Take thorough and deep cleaning seriously.** Consider professional cleaning companies so that staff or volunteers are not exposed without proper PPE. Provide COVID-19 prevention supplies during services or events, such as soap/hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, hand-washing stations, tissues, and waste baskets. At least twice a day and before and after each gathering, clean and disinfect high touch surfaces such as doorknobs, countertops, bathrooms, backs of pews, microphones, musical instruments, and all other highly used areas. Have a plan for how washrooms will be used to ensure safe distancing.

10. **Include your tenants.** Make every effort to ensure your tenants understand and are compliant with provincial guidelines and your own policies. Determine how you will monitor and what consequences will apply for non-compliance. The Ontario Government has mandated that renters **MUST** comply with vaccine mandates in order to use your facilities.

