



# Reopening the Church?

Things For Church Leaders  
To Consider



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# Before You Begin

As health measures slowly begin to ease in different parts of the country, we know that church leadership teams are now thinking, or will be in the near future, about the reopening of their churches to in-person gatherings. Much thought and effort has been given to this resource, as our districts and international office have collaborated to help you think through some of the “what” and “how” of reopening. We hope this resource will be helpful to you as, together, we begin to safely return to church gatherings in Canada.

We know each region of the country has different health measures in place, so we are trusting that you will take the time to become fully aware of all the regulations in your province or territory. **Be sure to keep the most current best practices in place, as they are constantly changing. Please check the appropriate government websites or contact your district office for some next steps.**

We are aware this is a lengthy document but certainly encourage all leaders to read through its entirety at some point. It is chock-full of important suggestions and considerations for in-person gatherings and best practices. Because you may not have time to read this resource all the way through right away, here is quick check-list to get you started as you begin to think through reopening.

## “Make Sure” List Before Reopening:

1. **Make sure** you are fully aware of and can comply with all of the health orders in place for in-person gatherings in your province or territory.
2. **Make sure** you follow your region’s restart plan and check with your MLA.
3. **Make sure** you contact your insurance provider to review your insurance policies and be clear on what your policy does and does not include.
4. **Make sure** you are regularly communicating with your church congregants.
5. **Make sure** you provide an opportunity for congregants to give feedback, to share their concerns and ask questions as you get closer to reopening. (ie. formal or informal survey)

# Getting Prepared

## *Questions and considerations*

### **It's important to do what is right for your specific setting.**

Agility and flexibility will be important as you navigate this season of leadership. Planning ahead and making informed decisions using current information specific to your region will help you build the strategy that best for your church. Reopening strategies that are good for some churches and communities may not be the right fit for you and your congregation.

### **Network and coordinate with other churches in your community and district.**

Everyone is figuring this out together, so connect with your peers to brainstorm and share resources.

### **Send a reopening survey to see how your congregants feel about returning.**

This is a simple and effective way to gather data which can help steer your decision-making and can significantly shape your strategy. It may also help people to feel at ease – Knowing that their church cares about their own feelings around reopening can help to build trust and confidence that they are being heard and thought of. A survey template has been included in the Additional Resources section of this document.

### **Be prepared for mixed responses on the survey and a slower return to church.**

Some people may be more cautious about returning to in-person gatherings. Others may be overly enthusiastic and need reminders that it will be a gradual return to full occupancy services and regular programming. Both groups of people will need consistent and clear communication about reopening.

### **Determine if you will take attendance to assist with potential contact tracing.**

Some Provincial and Territorial Governments have already implemented a contact tracing strategy, in order to more accurately identify potential exposure and prevent further spread. Others are still looking into options. Find out what is available in your region and consider if and how you will record who will be in your services and how you will respond should someone become COVID-19 positive. Be sure to communicate to your congregation the reason for collecting their information and reassure them that their privacy will be protected.

### **Consider shorter services as you begin reopening.**

People will feel different levels of anxiety when coming back. Keeping your service shorter can help them to feel more comfortable.

## **Be prepared to hold multiple services.**

With current capacity limitations, most churches going to have to adjust how they accommodate everyone. You will need to consider which adjustments are temporary and which will be implemented on a more long-term basis. The situation will likely require on-going adjustment for some time - It's okay to not have all of the long-term answers; but be honest about what you don't know.

## **Continue to provide digital/streaming worship services.**

The COVID-19 crisis has made online services more accessible to more people, and your church's online presence will continue to be an important component moving forward. Not everyone will be returning to in-person gatherings right away; for some, it may still be a long time. Develop a strategy for how you can connect with and minister to those joining online. One of the greatest mistakes we can make right now is to let go of the online momentum.

## **Consider how you can create specific entry and exit points.**

Does your facility allow you to use different sets of doors for entering and exiting so that people won't be running into one another? If possible, try to create a clear in-and-out system to eliminate close contacts at these pinch points; attempt to eliminate cross traffic as much as you can (both indoor and outdoor).

Once you have a plan, make sure the path is clear. Cones, flagging tape, and good signage (including directional arrows) can help with this. Position your volunteer team strategically to help guide people and vehicles. However you choose to communicate, make it fun, simple and obvious; don't leave anyone guessing.

## **Be prepared for entering and exiting to take longer.**

Seating people to ensure social distancing may take some additional time. If you have limited exits, you may need to stagger when people leave so they aren't crowded at the doorways. This aspect will be largely affected by the type of facility you have and will need to be factored into your schedule.

## **Seating is going to be different.**

To maintain appropriate social distancing guidelines, ensure that seats are at least 2 meters/6 feet apart. (Keep in mind that people who live in the same household may sit together.) Consider how you are going to facilitate this and include it in your reopening strategy – don't wait until Sunday morning to figure it out.

Separate movable seats. If you have pews, figure out how you will maintain distance between people, and don't forget to be mindful of both directions – side to side *and* front and back. Will you be roping off

seats and dividing up sections of the auditorium for seating? Think through how you are going to communicate your strategy effectively, both before reopening and when people are being seated. Make sure your team and attendees know exactly what to expect.

An effective way to control the number of attendees and help you plan ahead is to use an online booking or reservation system. You can set up free event ticketing through online sites, such as [reopen.church](https://reopen.church) or [eventbrite.ca](https://eventbrite.ca), so that your congregants can register for the service. Another option would be to set up an event on your church Facebook page to give them a place to RSVP.

### **Create signage to go throughout your building to remind people to socially distance.**

This can be done by using stickers on the floor, sandwich boards, posters, hand-held signs, TV slides, window/door/mirror decals, or flag banners. Consider that your local Health Authority may have signage available for you to download and print off. Remember, though, that all signage doesn't have to be scary or look like something you'd find in a professional setting. Make it fun and colourful. Use your signage strategically to convey the message and emotion you want people to understand: We need people to follow instructions, but we also want them to be comfortable and at ease.

There are a number of online resources that provide excellent signage ideas and products. Some websites you may want to check out include: [churchink.com](https://churchink.com), [churchswag.com](https://churchswag.com), [outreach.com](https://outreach.com), [popsigns.co](https://popsigns.co), [globeprinters.com](https://globeprinters.com). Get creative and make it fun!

### **Reposition your prayer ministry.**

Social distancing does not make it safe to hold altar calls and personal prayer in the way that we are accustomed to. Instead of eliminating this ministry, find ways to provide different outlets for people to experience this important element of church life. Pray as a large group (appropriately distanced) or train your team how to pray and connect with others over the phone or on a video call.

It is also important to move your pre-service prayer gathering out of small off-stage rooms and into a larger open area, such as the lobby or the front or back of your auditorium.

### **Create your gathering to be as 'touch-less' as possible.**

This will include removing most, if not all, hospitality elements.

### **Consider how you will take offering.**

Do not pass around an offering plate. Instead, point people to online giving or text-to-give options and create a station with a secure box for people to leave their tithes and offerings. Remember to wipe down this area after each use and put a plan in place to protect the person who will be collecting the contents of the box. If you require people to write on envelopes, think through how they will do this - If you will require people to bring their own pens and envelopes, clearly communicate that to them prior to gathering.

### **Consider how you will take communion.**

As with offering plates, do not pass around the elements. Consider using a communion station where people can pick up pre-packaged juice and wafer cups. Also think through how you will collect used cups. (It's recommended that people do not use the cup holders on the backs of pews/chairs as it can be difficult to properly sanitize these areas.) Make sure trash receptacles are readily available. You can find prepackaged communion cups from on various websites, including [Wordcom](#).

### **Consider what you are going to do about your coffee area.**

It is important to weigh the benefits of having a coffee station with the increased risk of how it may spread the virus and potential risks of additional anxiety or discomfort. If you are in doubt, are unsure, or have questions, it's best to not serve any coffee or food. When evaluating whether or not you should keep your coffee area operational, here are some things to consider:

- How will coffee be served? It is crucial that you get rid of any self-serve coffee stations – this includes the cream and sugar.
- Will there will be an exchange of money? (cash is currently not being accepted by many businesses)
- How can appropriate social distancing be maintained (between those waiting in line, those receiving coffee and those serving it)?
- Will you will require your café team to wear gloves or masks, and how you will maintain appropriate sanitization?

### **Go without a bulletin.**

Avoid handing anything out. Communicate important information through a weekly email, post updates online, and save important announcements for your main service. While on the topic of handouts, consider removing hymnals, envelopes, forms and pens from chair backs and pews.

### **Rethink how you welcome new guests.**

How will you respond if you have new guests in attendance? Will you still give them a gift? Will it be packaged in a way that will be easy for them to carry? Can they pick it up rather than have someone pass it to them? Can you make it fun and relevant, such as providing a free small bottle of hand sanitizer? Should you provide gifts at all?

Consider your New Guest contact form. Rather than use paper forms, direct new guests to an online form or have them text a number. Make the process simple and user-friendly.

## **Determine who will be required to wear gloves and/or a face-mask.**

Cleaners? Greeters? Parking attendants? Pastoral staff? Guests? While masks may not necessarily be crucial for all of your teams (i.e. those whose responsibilities allow for appropriate social distancing), consider the perception you're creating. Review the guidelines recommended by your local health authority when deciding what measures you will implement.

## **Determine if and how you will screen people.**

Will you screen guests as they drive into the parking lot or enter the building? Will you share expectations ahead of time and trust people's personal judgement?

If you do screening, make sure the directions and paths are clear, and place your check-in station strategically to ensure that no one can mistakenly pass by without checking in. Setting up a tent outside of your facility could be one way to create a clearly defined area for people to go to be screened and checked in.

Whether or not you choose to screen guests, consider posting signage reminding people not to enter if they are feeling unwell, experiencing symptoms, or have been in direct contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Refer to your provincial health guidelines for recommended self-assessment tools.

## **Consider the quality and the purpose of your gathering.**

Nearly every aspect of the service is going to be different with everyone socially-distanced and following other health guidelines. How is this going to impact the service? Do the risks of gathering in person outweigh the benefits? Are you gathering just because you can, or because you should?

Larry Osborne suggests that "it's time to go back to the building when we can provide a better experience in the building than we can online."

## **Consider what your reopening phases will look like.**

When your local government moves into the next phase of their provincial reopening plan, what does that mean for your church? Create an outline of what will open right away and what will be gradual. Keep your congregation informed of the plan, but also let them know that this is only a draft and is subject to change at any point.

## **Provide clarity about how many people can return and what the process will look like.**

You've been thinking about this and planning for a while, so you have some kind of idea of what to expect. But your congregation doesn't. Start from the very beginning and lay out the plan, step by step.



Many people are going to be anxious about returning, so make this as clear as possible for them. Don't leave anything to be guessed or assumed.

### **Practice your in-person gathering ahead of time.**

Doing a dry run of your gathering from start to finish is a helpful way to work through different what-if scenarios and possible missing pieces. This can also better prepare you for how volunteers should be trained to respond and can further assist with knowing where to make adjustments and build contingencies.

### **Keep your focus: Remember the mission of the Church.**

*How* we do church may change but *why* we do church should never change. Keep your focus on the main thing: The Great Commission.

### **When it's safe to re-open, celebrate what you have.**

It's very easy to observe everything that has been taken away from us and how different things will continue to be for a while, but don't forget to celebrate the wins and acknowledge what you do have.

### **Check out other resources to help guide your strategy.**

Remember that many church resources are produced in the United States, where the COVID-19 response varies drastically from the Canadian context. **Use the ideas, but always follow Canadian standards and your provincial and municipal guidelines.**

- [Church Fuel](#) provides [The Senior Pastor's Guide to Reopening](#) and a detailed and comprehensive [Covid Response Kit](#).
- Visit [covidsafechurch.com](https://covidsafechurch.com) for COVID-19 specific resources, including the [COVID-Safe Church Guideline](#).
- [Churchmarketinguniversity.com](https://churchmarketinguniversity.com) has some great relaunch ideas in their [Church Relaunch Playbook](#).
- Your provincial government or health authority may have guides specific to Faith Communities

# Cleaning

## *The top of your priority list*

During this COVID-19 season sanitization and *proper* cleaning is of utmost importance.

### **Create a Facility Cleaning Checklist.**

Think through every surface that will be touched and indicate that on a cleaning checklist. – this will make the process easier to remember and will ensure that nothing gets missed. (A Guide by Smart Church Solutions is included in the Additional Resources section.)

### **Fully stock your church's cleaning supplies.**

If you don't already have a full stock of cleaning supplies, put this at the top of your To-Do List. Due to the increased need for sanitization, you will also be running through your supply much more quickly. (A Guide by Smart Church Solutions is attached in the attached Resource Package)

### **Prepare your facility to be as touch-less as possible.**

- Determine which doors people need to touch in order to open, from the moment they arrive until when they leave.
- Purchase kick stands to prop doors and consider how you can place volunteers strategically to hold open doors.
- Remove any previously-used hospitality items, such as brochures, pamphlets and candies or treats (even if they're prepackaged).
- Cover water fountains and water bottle filling stations.

### **Train your staff and volunteers and be specific.**

Walk your cleaning staff and volunteers through the facility cleaning checklist, giving them clear and specific instructions.

### **Build sanitization into your schedule.**

If you are going to hold multiple services on the same day, you will need to plan to give extra time towards sanitizing between services. Everything is going to take a little longer than normal.

- Everything will need to be sanitized before the next group can enter, including pews/chairs, doors, railings, and anything else that could be touched. Do a walk-through and time how long the entire process takes.

- Research the drying time. Some disinfectants and sanitizers have a longer drying time, especially if you will be spraying down fabric seats or pews.

### **Make sure washrooms are regularly cleaned.**

- If the door leading into the washrooms cannot be propped open, consider placing a garbage can inside the door so that people can use paper towel to open the door when leaving.
- Follow any local guidelines regarding air hand dryers.
- Dust all fans and air ventilation covers to provide good airflow.
- Regularly wipe down bathroom stalls, including both sides of the doors and the door handles/locks.

### **Make hand sanitizing stations readily available.**

Place hand sanitizing stations (or antibacterial hand wipes) throughout the facility as much as possible, including points of entry.

### **Make sure your staff and volunteers are protected.**

Ensure that you are able to provide them with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) according to your regional health guidelines.

# Volunteers

## *Retrain your teams*

As you think through how you will be modifying some of your Sunday morning ministries, consider that your volunteers will need guidance and retraining to help them serve within the new guidelines.

### **Coach teams to be hospitable.**

Many guests will arrive with some feelings of anxiety. Coach your teams on how to be a friendly and comforting face. Encourage volunteers to always smile, even if they're wearing a mask. Be sure your volunteers fully understand your church's reopening strategy so that they can *confidently* answer any questions guests may have. Do your best to make sure they know the answers to these questions before they're asked, and also train them for how to respond if they don't know. Then, make sure it's clear to volunteers where they can go to find an answer.

## **Use technology to your advantage.**

Creating video teaching to send to your team members ensures everyone receives the same communication and allows them to watch at their convenience. You may also want to consider meeting through online media platforms to allow for more training, feedback and questions.

## **Reinforce physical distancing expectations with every volunteer.**

When we're with friends, our avoidance of social norms can be easily forgotten. It's important that volunteers never give pats on the back, handshakes, or fist bumps. Remind your volunteers to also keep distance between one another, even if they are from the same family (not everyone always knows who's related to who). It's important that volunteers remember that their behaviour is setting an example for those in attendance.

## **Don't limit volunteer opportunities to positions *only* inside the building.**

Consider volunteers who may be vulnerable individuals (elderly, immune compromised, etc.) and find a way for them to be involved. Can they serve elsewhere or in a modified capacity? Utilize your greeting or prayer teams to help as hosts and moderators on your livestream chat, enlist a team to phone each member of your congregation to check up on them, provide opportunities for meal deliveries... the list goes on. When in doubt, ask people what they would be comfortable doing and don't pressure anyone to do something that makes them uncomfortable. Do what you can to find ways for them to serve in a way that prioritizes their health and safety.

## **Give them pastoral care.**

Pastor, your congregation includes your volunteers. Don't assume that they don't need to be checked up on, or that someone else is checking in on them. Make sure they're being cared for and responded to.

# *Modify and Adjust*

*(if you have any of these teams)*

## **Parking Lot Team**

- Strategically place volunteers outside of your building to welcome and guide people as they arrive and leave.
- Instruct volunteers how to guide guests if there are any special parking, entering, or screening instructions.

## **Greeting Team**

- Hold the door open for guests as they enter and exit.
- Smile and be friendly – these are the first faces people will see.
- Prepare volunteers with answers to questions about what is happening with Children’s Ministries.
- Do not shake hands or give out bulletins.

## **Guest Services**

- Prepare volunteers with answers to questions about what is happening with Children’s Ministries.
- Consider not giving out a welcome gift and try to move your new guest form to online as much as possible.
- If you’re able to provide a fillable form on a device such as an iPad or tablet, train your team how to use the online form and how to clean the devices properly after each use.

## **Café Team**

Any service provided will need to follow food industry standards for safe food handling and serving. If these standards cannot be maintained at all times, it’s best to do without coffee for now.

## **Ushers Team**

- Do not shake hands or give out bulletins.
- Help people find a place to sit, reminding them of social distancing guidelines if necessary.
- Prepare volunteers with answers to questions about what is happening with Children’s Ministries.
- Hold open the doors to the auditorium when people enter and exit (if they cannot be propped open).

## **Prayer Team**

- Move pre-service prayer to an open area, such as at the front or back of the auditorium or a chapel rather than a smaller side-stage room.
- Refrain from praying with individuals in close settings. Instead, pray as a large group (appropriately distanced) or provide opportunities for your team to pray with people over the phone or via video call.

## **Offering Team**

- Do not pass around offering plates or baskets.
- If you have a POS (Point of Sale) machine available for debit/credit, train your team to wipe down the machine after each use. Also show them how the counter needs to be cleaned after each use.

- Prepare volunteers with answers to questions about alternate giving options (ie: online giving or text-to-give)

## **Communion Team**

- Do not pass around plates of juice and crackers.
- If you choose to set up an area where people can pick up a prepackaged cup and wafer, be sure volunteers handle the cups carefully, as people will put them to their mouth.
- Prepare your team to set up garbage receptacles strategically to collect used cups.
- Make sure that your team is equipped with gloves and that they are worn at all times when distributing and collecting waste. Remember that proper hand-washing practises are still the most effective way of keeping your volunteers and attenders safe.

## **Worship & Tech Team**

- Ensure your team is always using clean equipment and provide them with sanitizing wipes. This includes wiping down music stands, microphone stands, microphones, cords, keyboards, amp switches and dials, in-ear mixing units, lighting boards, sound boards, media computers and cameras. *Be VERY careful with all of this equipment.* Make sure you research how to properly clean your equipment and follow the user manuals before using any cleaning products or liquids on this expensive equipment. If you're still unsure, reach out to another church with a technical team for guidance.
- Remind your team to keep socially distant when entering and leaving the stage, as well as where they are placed on stage.
- Adjust stations in the tech booth as much as possible to allow for social distancing. If you're unable to move your computer(s) or board(s), consider if your team will be required to wear facemasks.
- Encourage your team not to gather in a side-stage room as these can often be small and not allow for social distancing.

# Children's Ministry

## *Before you begin*

First, know that you should only consider having Children's Ministry once things like daycares, summer camps and kids' programs have resumed in your community. Even once these things have started, the question you need to ask is, *"With the necessary protocols in place, is our Kids' Ministry going to be a positive experience for the kids?"*

**Ensure that your rollout will be a comprehensive plan that accomplishes the following objectives:**

- Instills a feeling of cleanliness and safety for parents
- Implements current social distancing protocols
- Activates team members with updated training and roll out strategies

**Some reasons not to resume Preschool (and younger) Ministry, even after church reopens:**

- Given their age and the kind of care we provide, it is impossible to social distance while providing adequate care for them.
- The level of developmentally appropriate separation anxiety when returning to church will be high for this age group. Parents will need time to re-establish the church routine and comfort level within their family.
- The amount of hand-to-mouth items is significant with young children and will take an extensive cleaning plan.

## *SOME Recommended best practices for Children's Ministry*

*Recommended guidelines vary from region to region. Please refer to your local guidelines in relation to best practices for gatherings involving children. Here are a few things to consider as you prepare.*

### **Volunteers**

- Train volunteers to keep personal connection high while being mindful of safety and new cleaning measures.
- Consider the impact on the most vulnerable and re-locate vulnerable team members (elderly or immunocompromised) to an alternate ministry role. Consider that that moving these members out

of the Children's Ministry setting may require recruitment of new volunteers and/or may impact volunteer scheduling.

### **Check-in**

- Wellness policy posted (updated with a 72-hour symptom-free time period)
- A "no-touch" check-in process; no self-check in
- Social distancing encouraged through signage
- Volunteers wearing masks
- One parent drop-off and pick-up
- No personal items such as bags, car seats, or toys from home

### **Sick child**

Children showing symptoms will not be admitted. If a child begins to show symptoms of sickness (lethargic, fever, consistent coughing, etc.) they will be taken to a designated room and parent will be contacted for an early check out.

### **Socially-distanced activity ideas**

Keep in mind that social distancing may be more difficult for children. Plan games and activities that make social distancing easier to maintain. Contact your Children's Ministry colleagues or your district office for ideas.



# **Additional Resources**

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# Sample Church Survey

*At (Church Name) we want to reopen our church in a safe, spacious & sanitized way. We would like your input and feedback. Would you take a few minutes to answer the questions we have provided in this survey to help us make the best decisions moving forward.*

(Not sure how to create an online survey? Here are some survey creation and sharing options: [SurveyMonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com), [Google forms](https://www.google.com/forms), [Gravity form](https://www.gravityform.com), [JotForm](https://www.jotform.com), [Formstack](https://www.formstack.com), [Typeform.com](https://www.typeform.com))

## **When would you feel comfortable attending a physical locations for church?**

- When stay-at-home orders are lifted
- Several weeks after stay-at-home orders are lifted
- After schools are back open
- After a vaccine is available

## **If you have children in our kids program (birth - 5th grade) which is your preference?**

- Attending a family service with everyone together
- Attending a family service with everyone together but have your children watch our kids program on devices you provide
- Wait for our kids program to fully reopen

## **If you have children in our student program (6th - 12th grade) when would you feel comfortable with them attending their program on Friday nights?**

- When stay-at-home orders are lifted
- Several weeks after stay-at-home orders are lifted
- After schools are back open
- After a vaccine is available

## **In the last 6 weeks, how many times have you watched our services online?**

- 4-5 times per month
- 2-3 times per month
- Once per month
- Less than once per month

## **What online content have you accessed during COVID-19?**

- Weekend adult services
- Weekend kids services
- Weekend student services
- Midweek content for adults
- Midweek content for kids

- Midweek content for students

**If you haven't interacted with our online content, why not?**

- No interest
- Wasn't aware of any
- Difficult to access
- No time

**Please select any answers that you feel would ensure your safety when we reopen?**

- Provide hand sanitizer
- Volunteers wear gloves
- Volunteers wear masks
- Require guests to wear masks
- Constant cleaning of highly touched areas
- Limit paper handouts
- Use a new method for collecting the offering
- Encourage social distancing in service seating
- Prop doors open so people don't have to touch handles

**Do you want the church to serve coffee and refreshments?**

- Yes, but only if it is NOT self-serve
- No

**Are you comfortable with us having communion together?**

- Yes, but only if it is given to me by an individual with gloves and a mask
- Yes, but only if I am able to pick it up from a serving station prior to the service starting
- No

**Are you comfortable with a giving station available, where people can place their tithes into a secured box?**

- Yes, but only if a volunteer wipes down the station after each person
- I will continue to give online and would not need to use a giving station
- I will continue to drop my tithes off at the church office during the week

**If you volunteer, when will you volunteer at a physical location after we reopen?**

- Immediately
- After several weeks

- After several months

**If you volunteer, are you planning to volunteer in the same spot when we reopen?**

- Yes, and I am open to other opportunities or areas of need
- Yes, and I am not interested in serving in another area
- No, I want to volunteer in a different area
- No, I will wait until I am more comfortable before resuming volunteering

**Which of the following describes the attendance capacity at which you would be comfortable attending a worship service?**

- Full
- 50 people
- 40 people
- 25 people
- 10 people
- Other
- I will not/cannot attend a service in person until there is a vaccine available

**Are you in favour of us rolling out house churches/small groups of 10 people to get back to meeting together physically until it is safe to do so at our full size?**

- Yes, I would like to join a home group/small group
- Yes, I would continue to connect with my current home group/small group
- No, I would prefer to have a larger gathering of 50 people or less at the church
- No, I would prefer to not meet with anyone in person at this time

**Which care resources would you be interested in learning more about as a result of COVID-19?**

- Finances
- Marriage
- Grief
- Mental health (anxiety, depression, etc.)
- Other

**How has your online giving experience been during COVID-19?**

- Easy
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

**Any other comments or questions?**

COVID-19 Questions & Answers (posted May 22, 2020)

With provinces across Canada gradually easing restrictions on COVID-19 bans on public gatherings, events and closures of non-essential workplace premises, the leaders of charities across Canada are looking for direction from governments, lawyers and their insurance providers to do so safely. Our office has seen a rise in questions from our church, school, camp, mission and other charity client organizations and we're pleased to provide the following Q & A for the eight (8) most commonly asked questions.

***1. Our organization operates a food bank and/or provides meals to those in need in our community, or we would like to begin to do so during COVID-19. How do we do this safely and is it insured?***

**Answer:** For restaurants open during the pandemic, the emphasis has been on takeout and delivery utilizing a "no contact" guarantee from the time food comes from the oven or packaging, until the time it is in the hands of the consumer. Likewise, any non-profit organizations providing such services will also need to guarantee a touch-less food distribution process, including the use of masks and gloves worn by workers and volunteers. You should also consider wherever possible to follow the example of commercial stores in having customers pull up to a parking spot and have food delivered into an open trunk. For meals provided onsite, avoid open food buffet lines. Instead, provide prepackaged sealed meals for pickup. For sit-down meals subject to minimum social distancing, provide prepackaged utensils and plates and ensure that servers must wear face-masks and gloves. It is also important all times to ensure you are operating strictly in accordance with your provincial government requirements and local public health agency guidelines, including obtaining specific permission based on your program particulars, and to keep checking with your health agency to keep up to date with any changing standards or requirements. Regarding insurance protection, your General Liability policy does contain "Products and Completed Operations" coverage, which includes protection for any insurable legal liability against your organization arising out of your products, including food and beverages.

***2. When non-essential workplace restrictions are eased, can our church or charity allow outside user groups to resume meetings?***

**Answer:** Just because your organization is allowed to resume operations on premises, subject to any applicable government or health agency requirements regarding social distancing and interaction, does not mean that you should automatically allow outside user groups on your premises. The reason is two-fold; firstly, because that group's activity may not be allowable or advisable unless they can provide you

with written evidence that their activity meets government authority guidelines; and secondly, an outside group's members and health conditions are unknown to your organization and they may be responsible for the transmission of the virus between their attendees on your premises, including viral residue left on surfaces that may affect the health of your staff, members and attendees. If the outside user group has provided you with proof that their activity is allowable, it will be more important than ever to collect proof of their liability insurance coverage, including being named as additional insured on their policy, to avoid your organization and its directors becoming legal liable for their negligence in viral transmission. Please also ensure that your custodian cleans all surfaces in the space where the user group has met, including meeting rooms, kitchens, washrooms, fellowship halls, gymnasiums and auditoriums. Avoid allowing use of facilities when you are operating your own programs or ministries at the same time, or use by multiple outside groups at the same time, where there may be groups or individuals using the same entrances, washrooms or other spaces. The use of your facility space should be exclusive to your own programs and events, or to one user group at a time.

**3. *Is "Drive-In" Church an option for our weekly services?***

**Answer:** As has been demonstrated by churches in Canada and the United States over the past weeks, conducting church services outdoors has been a viable option to indoor worship. Each outdoor venue is different, including the size of parking lots, how the service is staged, and how the audio portion is transmitted to attendees. Assuming your church has met provincial government requirements and local public health agency guidelines, including social distancing between vehicles/families in parking lots, during collection of tithes and offerings (preferably online or in a drop box) and with respect to providing public washroom facilities, this is an acceptable option.

**4. *Our premises is currently unused or under-utilized during the current lockdown or restrictions. We have received a request from a local hospital, medical clinic, social agency, or other not-for-profit organization or business providing essential services, to rent or use our facility for COVID-19 related activities including testing, triaging, storage, or for quarantine space. Is this acceptable from an insurance standpoint?***

**Answer:** We've heard from a number of our church and charity clients regarding this type of usage, including some great opportunities to meet the needs of a community. Although it can be acceptable, there are three important factors to consider, prior to approving this. Firstly, the outside agency or business must provide you with proof of liability coverage including professional liability from their insurance provider, including naming your organization as additional insured. Secondly, if individuals suspected of being infected will be onsite, you need to ensure that any other building use by your

organization will be strictly segregated from any contact with the outside organization's usage, including restricted interior access, separate entrances and separate parking. Thirdly, you need to have assurances from the outside organization that they will take care of the cost to have the rented or used space professionally cleaned and decontaminated on an ongoing periodic basis, and after they vacate your premises.

***5. Our organization has suffered a loss of tithes, offerings, donations or rental income due to the COVID-19 ban on public gatherings, and shut-down of non-essential workplaces. Is this insurable?***

**Answer:** Commercial and institutional insurance policies often include what is known as Business Interruption coverage. If your organization has Property coverage included in your policy (i.e. for buildings and/or contents) through Robertson Hall, then your policy will also contain a provision for Loss of Revenue and Additional Expenses. However, Business Interruption covers only reductions in income or additional expenses caused by direct physical loss of, or damage to, insured property at the premises described in your policy. This is standard in all Business Interruption wordings. For example, direct physical loss or damage includes occurrences such as a fire, flood, windstorm, vandalism or other insurable peril at your premises. If it results in your building needing to be rebuilt or to be substantially repaired, and as a consequence rendered unusable for a period of time, then the loss of income from not being able to operate or the extra expenses to operate elsewhere, are covered. A general civil authority order for closure due to pandemic is not an insurable peril or claim.

***6. When we do re-open our programs, ministries and events, are we covered if someone catches coronavirus at our premises, or during off-premises sponsored activities?***

**Answer:** Currently your general liability insurance policy does not include an exclusion for the unintended transmission of disease, including coronavirus. Therefore, assuming you are operating in accordance with your provincial government requirements and local public health agency guidelines, your organization and directors will have coverage for actual or alleged liability claims by third parties who claim that they acquired the virus due to your organization's negligence. However, and although it is speculation at this point, in light of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic there is a real possibility that by the end of 2020 we will see Infectious Disease Transmission Exclusions added to liability policies issued by insurance companies in North America and elsewhere.

***7. We've always paid our insurance premiums in one lump sum at renewal time. However with the ban on public gatherings and closure of non-essential workplace premises, it has affected our budget. Are there any payment options this year?***

**Answer:** To provide payment flexibility, we've been sending advance renewal notifications this year with various payment options, including an extended monthly payment plan option. For your convenience this notice includes a partially completed payment plan authorization form and quote. If you wish to take advantage of the extended payment option, please sign the form and return it to our office prior to the renewal date, along with the down payment amount indicated and sample void cheque for the bank account from which the monthly payments are to be withdrawn. Thank you.

***8. We noticed that our most recent insurance policy through Robertson Hall Insurance now has two insurance companies shown on the invoice and Subscription Schedule in our renewal document. Why?***

**Answer:** Unrelated to COVID-19, the property casualty insurance industry in North America and elsewhere has been undergoing hardening market conditions since 2019, resulting in premium rate increases, decreased coverage scope, reduced insurer capacity, and in some cases, non-renewal. In order to address this, Robertson Hall proactively engaged an additional insurance underwriter to ensure that all of our church and charity clients would have access to the same level of property and liability protection as they have always enjoyed. The new insurer, HDI Global Specialty SE, is a member company of the Hannover Reinsurance Group, the third largest reinsurance group in the world. It is vitally important to us that your insurance program is underwritten by underwriters who have the financial stability and capacity to pay large claims, when our client organizations need it most!

**DISCLAIMER:** The information provided in this notice is for general information purposes only. For more specific information about your insurance coverage, please refer to your full policy wordings, or contact our office. With respect to specific legal requirements and guidelines regarding potential programs, ministries and events, on or off premises, please check with your provincial ministry of health and your local public health agency.

Sincerely yours,

*Kenneth A. Hall, President*



# POST-CORONAVIRUS FACILITY RE-OPENING CHECKLIST

## PARKING LOTS

- Check and clean all entrances
- Clean all debris from parking areas
- Check striping and directional arrows, repaint as needed
- Check all signage and repair as needed
- Patch any cracks or holes, especially along walkways
- Check all parking lot lighting, replace/repair as needed

## EXTERIOR LANDSCAPING

- Clean all debris as necessary
- Check operation of all irrigation, repair as necessary
- Schedule irrigation back-flow preventer inspection (if necessary)
- Trim all trees and plantings, especially around entrances, and walkways
- Refresh all beds
- Inspect all exterior signage, repair and replace as necessary
- Check operation of any landscape lighting, repair/replace as needed

## FACILITY EXTERIOR

- Check all entrances, remove any collected debris
- Check operation of all exterior doors, lubricate all hardware as needed
- Clean, replace, or add entrance matting as needed
- Check all exterior facility lighting, repair/replace as needed
- Ensure any pest control stations are still operational
- Inspect and clean all awnings (if applicable)
- Inspect porte-cochere (drive-thru's), clean as necessary
- Clean and sanitize all playgrounds, exterior children's areas

## FACILITY EXTERIOR (cont.)

- Check all fencing, repair as required. Lubricate all gates and locks
- Inspect dumpster storage area, clean as necessary
- Inspect all accessible parking and routes, ensure all contrasting color sections are correct
- Clean all exterior glass. Check all seals and caulking. Repair/repaint all trim as needed
- Inspect all fire or emergency exit pathways/routes
- Check all downspout discharge areas, ensure they are clear of debris

## GAS

- Check all gas appliances for proper operation, re-light as necessary
- Inspect gas meter(s), visual inspection only. If anything appears incorrect, contact utility company
- Run all gas appliances for a typical cycle before you allow operations to resume

## PLUMBING & WATER

- In restrooms, check all fixtures and run/flush/let them run for a bit.
- Ensure all fill valves and flappers function, replace as necessary
- Empty and clean ice makers. Let them fill one time, dump the ice, then refill
- Inspect any back-flow preventer valves in the facility (if applicable)
- Pour at least a half-gallon of water down every active floor drain

# POST-CORONAVIRUS FACILITY RE-OPENING CHECKLIST

## ELECTRICAL

- Inspect all panels for clearance and tripped breakers
- For tripped breakers: investigate for cause, resolve issue, reset breaker
- Take a section of the facility at a time to restore power/turn-on equipment/reset power strips
- Inspect all GFCI outlets/circuits for correct operation
- Inspect all automatic doors, low-voltage operators
- Inspect any extension cords in use for proper gauge, condition, and necessity. Replace as required

## HVAC

- Inspect all exterior components. Clean coils, remove any debris, check for proper operation of electrical disconnect, and ensure suction line insulation is intact
- Inspect interior components. Replace filters as required, check the piping for the over-flow pan, ensure disconnects function, and inspect coil (if applicable)
- Operate all the HVAC equipment in both modes to ensure proper equipment operation and control operation
- Inspect back-flow preventer valves (if applicable)
- Clean all HVAC supply vents in the facility
- Check belts for proper tension/condition. Ensure spares are available for all equipment
- Set correct temperatures at all units.

## LIFE SAFETY

- Inspect AED pads and equipment. Check dates and ensure spare pads and batteries are present
- Inspect all first-aid supplies, especially dates, replace as required
- Check all portable fire extinguishers (monthly inspections)
- If applicable, check firefighter operation of elevator(s)
- Check all emergency exit signs and lighting for proper operation. Replace fixtures/batteries as required

## LIFE SAFETY (cont.)

- Inspect any foodstuffs in the facility for condition and date range
- Inspect all flashlights and any other emergency operations materials
- Check operation of all locking systems
- Inspect fire, intrusion alarms, sprinkler systems for proper operation. Will require a licensed company to perform

## VEHICLES

- Ensure registration on all motor vehicles and trailers is current
- Ensure all insurance on motor vehicles and trailers is current
- Check all fluids (washer, oil, transmission, etc.)
- Check tires, replace/rotate as required
- Inspect wipers, window seals and gaskets. Replace as required
- Check all lights for proper operation, replace as required
- Drive all motor vehicles to ensure proper operation prior to taking on passengers
- Ensure all first-aid and safety supplies are in vehicles. This includes a first-aid kit, fire extinguisher, safety cones, spare fuses, jumper cables, flashlight, etc.

## FACILITY INTERIOR

- Check ceiling tiles for stains and/or damage. Replace/repair as required
- Ensure proper operation of all space lighting
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all tables and chairs, paying attention to the underside of each
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all toys
- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all "high touch" areas. This can include keyboards, phones, door hardware, elevator call buttons, handrails, water fountains, bathroom partition hardware, backs of chairs/pews, offering plates, touchscreens, badge printers, etc.

# POST-CORONAVIRUS FACILITY RE-OPENING CHECKLIST

## FACILITY INTERIOR (cont.)

- Clean, disinfect, and sanitize all trash receptacles, changing tables, cribs, and the walls in children's areas, between 18"-32" off the floor
- Inspect all spaces to ensure they are clean and in good condition.
- Run your HVAC system or open windows to allow for a fresh air exchange prior to occupation

## WORSHIP AREAS

- Condition the space and have pianos tuned as required
- Inspect/check lighting system, to include the dimmers and theatrical lighting (as applicable)
- Inspect/check sound system for proper operation
- Inspect/check all AV equipment for alignment, focus, and operation
- If possible, perform a tech run-through at least a week prior to the onset of services
- Perform additional dusting and cleaning on the seating areas.
- Fill and perform a function check on the baptistery (as required)
- Check pews/seating for all required envelopes, inserts, and hymnals. Ensure they are up to date

## ROOFS

- Walk, inspect the roof and repair any area required
- Check operation of all drains, gutters, scuppers, and downspouts
- Check roof (if low slope) for any debris and remove as necessary

## GENERAL

- Ensure all custodial supplies and equipment are clean, stocked, and available (to include consumables). Check the SDS book and make sure to list all chemicals and have a copy of the current SDS
- Ensure all maintenance, custodial, and supply closets/rooms are cleaned and organized
- Remove all unnecessary items from the property
- Walk entire property prior to allowing operations to fully commence. Check all areas (including the exterior) and perform a final visual check for any items out of place or requiring adjustment

# Post - COVID-19

## Facility Utilization:

### *Social Distancing, Ministry Considerations, and More...*

Smart Church Solutions has developed this guide to help you consider how you can effectively and intentionally resume a limited live meeting and worship experience while still adhering to the ever-changing recommendations. We have attempted to present many of the more difficult choices you will need to consider prior to the resumption of operations, albeit in a limited capacity.

Whether you personally agree with some of the suggestions and restrictions on large group gatherings (that vary from state to state and sometimes county to county), we encourage you to take the lead in adhering to public gathering safety guidelines. To intentionally disregard suggested measures is not prudent nor is it a good witness.

This list is NOT exhaustive and must be considered at the local church level. Be wise and prudent as you navigate these highly unique times.





