



Eastern Synod
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

CHECKLIST FOR THE SAFE RESUMPTION OF
IN-PERSON WORSHIP

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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CHECKLIST FOR THE SAFE RESUMPTION OF IN-PERSON WORSHIP

The Eastern Synod encompasses four provinces with a vast number of Public Health units. We encourage each congregation to familiarize themselves with local guidelines and follow their directives as you make decisions, plan and prepare. Even after returning to in-person worship, a congregation may find the sudden need to close the building again due to an outbreak in their region and/or province. Our hope is that this document will help you carefully assess your context and make wise decisions around in-person ministry to help lessen the risk of infection and transmission of COVID-19. **These are not comprehensive guidelines**

that can simply be applied without consideration of context. Each ministry will need to adapt and apply this information after assessing their particular context. Always consult Provincial and Federal websites for the most current information and Public Health regulations.

In addition, you must assess the comfort level and willingness of people in your congregation to adhere to physical distancing guidelines. Will the congregation/user/rental groups commit to and follow through with cleaning and disinfection protocols? Many of the congregation's most committed volunteers are particularly susceptible to the COVID-19 virus because of their age and other pre-existing health conditions. Cleaners should not be those at higher risk (65+, etc.)

A PRAYER FOR A TIME OF PREPARATION

Eternal God, we give you thanks for your loving presence with us throughout this challenging season of pandemic. As we begin a time of planning and preparation to re-enter our church buildings and reunite with one another in worship, we pray for your continuing grace, guidance and comfort.

Encourage and equip us, give us wisdom and insight, keep our hearts and minds peaceful and focused on creating safe and welcoming spaces and liturgies.

As we once again physically gather in your name, however strange or unsettling our new practices may seem at first, help us remember our faithful worship will always be holy, always pleasing to you. All this, and whatever else you see that we need, we ask in the name of Jesus, Immanuel, 'God-with-us'. Amen.

Written by: Rev. Susan Climo

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT

- How has COVID-19 impacted your congregation's ministry?
- What are the opportunities for new ministry?
- How has the use of technology enhanced your ministry?
- How has your connection been strengthened while physically apart? How will you stay connected with those who cannot/choose not to gather in-person?
- What does it mean to be missional in your current context?
- What new needs are being discovered?
- What else might God be nudging you to try?
- How will a return to in-person and/or a hybrid style of worship help or hinder these kinds of opportunities?

Revised March 2021

		Person/Group Responsible	Done
A10	Remove all shared items such as brochures, hymnals, Bibles, other books, pew cards, busy bags, soft toys, pencils. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Items used in worship should be assigned and kept with participant. Items used in worship that remain in the building must be sanitized. 		
A11	Determine how access to washrooms will be managed (eg. emergency use only). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate how many people will be allowed in public washrooms at one time. Install 2 metre markers in hallway for those who are waiting. Identify individuals to clean and disinfect high touch areas frequently during building use. Post Hand Hygiene signage. 		
A12	Volunteers, leaders and worshippers are expected to wear a non-medical mask inside the building		
A13	Place hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol content at the entrance and exit and throughout the facility.		
A14	Ensure that worship leaders will be able to have appropriate physical distance from each other. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A microphone is available for each worship leader. 		
A15	Designate how many people will be allowed in the elevator and post signage.		
A16	Close water fountains.		
A17	Introduce more fresh air by increasing the ventilation system air intake or opening windows. Avoid central air recirculation where possible. Do not use fans.		
A18	Explore the use of temporary partitions to support physical distancing. Suggestions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ArtSoft Lumichrom Office Central Interiors 		
A19	Review and modify if needed, the emergency safety protocols (eg. fire evacuation, medical emergency, etc.)		

		Person/Group Responsible	Done
WORSHIP PREPARATION			
B1	<p>A plan is in place to determine how many services will be offered to accommodate worshippers within maximum capacity as per provincial regulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A membership rotation or sign-up system has been developed. • Schedules are clearly communicated. • Space has been reserved for unexpected visitors. 		
B2	<p>A plan is in place to offer remote participation for those who will not/cannot attend in person. (eg. Live Streaming, Recorded, Zoom, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider directing people to other/additional online worship resources. 		
B3	<p>Extra accommodations are in place for individuals with specific needs (nursing mothers, people requiring additional space/privacy).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate specific seating area in the most private area of the sanctuary. 		
B4	<p>Contact information is kept for attendees, staff and volunteers at all services to support contact tracing by Public Health authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure screening is completed before entry. Screening Poster • A confidential storage system has been established for collected information with controlled access by pre-determined individuals. • A plan for a 3 year retention of collected information has been established. • A plan for the destruction (after 3 years) of collected information has been established. 		
B5	<p>A plan is in place to facilitate the participation of worshippers by way of a single-use bulletin and/or projection/slideshow.</p>		
B6	<p>Congregational singing is considered high risk and is prohibited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recorded or streamed music has been prepared when necessary. • Only one soloist or woodwind instrumentalist to participate in worship with augmented physical distancing (min. 4 metres). 		
B7	<p>Church music ensembles who wish to practice or perform together should explore virtual rehearsals and/or recording sessions.</p>		
B8	<p>A plan to engage children, while ensuring that they remain in their family unit, has been developed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children under 2 years old should be held by a parent/guardian. • Consider assembling simple, single-use activity bags (paper) which would be sent home with children. 		
B9	<p>The peace is shared without physical contact and while remaining in place.</p>		

		Person/Group Responsible	Done
B10	<p>An alternate plan for receiving offertory gifts has been established.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAR is available. • Online options for giving are communicated. • Offertory plate/basket is available for physical offerings but is neither circulated nor presented at the altar. 		
B11	<p>Holy Communion</p> <p><i>Congregations who are uncomfortable with the necessary accommodations required for Holy Communion at this time are encouraged to offer in-person liturgies using the ELW Service of the Word.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only the Pastor will handle the preparation, consecration and distribution of communion. • Only bread will be distributed. Communion in one kind is recognized as a full experience of the Sacrament, and will be explained to the congregation. • Wafers will be used instead of 'loaf' bread which needs additional handling to be torn into pieces. • The Pastor will publicly wash/sanitize hands before and after distribution of communion. • Distribution of communion will occur without touching the communicant's hands. • If the Pastor accidentally touches the communicant's hands, they will suspend distribution to re-sanitize their hands before continuing. • The Pastor and communicants will wear a non-medical mask during the distribution of communion. • Ushers will direct worshippers to receive communion single file, standing, and return to their seats, while observing physical distancing requirements at all times. Distribution should not take place using altar rails or kneelers. • Communicants will be asked to sanitize their hands prior to receiving communion. • A blessing may be offered without touch. • If the Pastor has underlying health conditions, or is otherwise vulnerable, an assisting minister is assigned to distribute communion. • To minimize contact, the communicant will pause two metres from the Pastor, who says, "The body of Christ..." and respond "Amen", before approaching to receive communion, then step aside, remove mask, eat wafer, reapply mask, re-sanitize hands and return to their seat. • All safety measures observed by the worship leaders will be explained to the congregation. 		

		Person/Group Responsible	Done
B12	Holy Baptism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 gathering at the font maintain physical distancing. • The presiding minister wears a non-medical mask at the font. • Water is poured on the baptized with a sanitized vessel. • The baptized is anointed with oil in a clean cotton ball. • A member of the baptismal party lights the baptismal candle from the paschal candle. • Only one baptism should happen during a single gathering. • The newly baptized should not be processed through the sanctuary. 		
B13	Weddings and Funerals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weddings and funerals must adhere to public health guidelines in effect at the time. • Weddings and funerals held within the church building must follow the same guidelines as all other worship services. 		
VOLUNTEER PREPARATION			
C1	Ushers Congregations are required to provide training in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming roles (screening, attendance record, masks, physical distancing and hand sanitizing). • Facilitating movement throughout the service (eg. entry, Holy Communion, exit). 		
C2	Counters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical distancing is practiced and gloves are worn during the counting of the offering. • Offering should be counted immediately following worship to limit the need for access to the building during the week. • Limit the number of people who physically handle the money. (eg. One person opens envelopes while another records and observes). • Wash hands immediately after removing gloves. 		

		Person/Group Responsible	Done
LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION			
D1	<p>Communicate to staff, volunteers and worshippers the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who exhibit common COVID symptoms (cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat) must not attend. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health Canada COVID-19 Self-Assessment • Those who have travelled internationally in the last 14 days must not attend. • Those who have had close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case must not attend. • Those over 65, or with underlying medical conditions, are considered higher risk. 		
D2	Communicate changes to entrances/exits and worship space.		
D3	<p>Communicate physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Canada Posters 		
D4	<p>Communicate that in-home visitation is discouraged during the amber phase. Exceptions may be made in emergency circumstances or to provide end of life pastoral care. Emergency pastoral care visits require physical distancing, masks, and proper hand hygiene.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically distanced ministries have been established to maintain contact with members who are unable to gather for in-person worship. 		
D5	Communicate the need for children to remain in their family unit for the duration of worship.		
D6	Communicate changes to worship services in advance to set expectations (eg. no congregational singing, reception of Holy Communion, no greeting or coffee hour).		
D7	<p>Welcome team is placed at entrance to screen worshippers and ensure understanding of safety protocols.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worshippers are asked to review self-assessment questions. • Worshippers are asked to sanitize their hands and wear a mask. 		
D8	A plan is in place to communicate urgent scheduling changes/cancellations to in-person worship if infection rates rise.		
D9	Encourage worshippers to bring a minimum of personal belongings into the church and stipulate that all belongings must remain with the person at all times.		

		Person/Group Responsible	Done
HOSPITALITY			
E1	Non-medical masks are available for all participants including staff and volunteers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worshippers are encouraged to bring their own mask. 		
E2	Training is provided to all staff and volunteers.		
E3	Professional cleaners or trained volunteers are designated to clean and sanitize high-traffic areas between services and/or facility usage.		
E4	The Congregational Council remains aware of new Public Health guidelines and has a plan in place to discontinue in-person worship if levels of infection rise.		
E5	Renters/Outside Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congregations may permit outside groups to use the facility providing they follow all health guidelines regarding physical distancing, etc., and have the resources to handle cleaning requirements between each use. The Congregational Council is responsible for ensuring that renters are adequately insured and have sufficient plans for the safe resumption of in-person gatherings. Council will approve users' written protocols to ensure adherence to public health guidelines. Facility rentals should be suspended if groups cannot or will not adhere to public health gathering restrictions. 		
E6	Pastoral support is available to members who may find gathering modifications uncomfortable and/or challenging.		

PROVINCIAL RESOURCES

Nova Scotia

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/>

New Brunswick

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/promo/covid-19.html>

Quebec

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/>

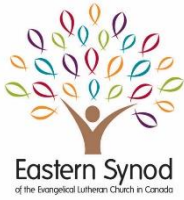
Ontario

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful for the work of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories, whose Checklist for In-person Worship has been modified for use in the Eastern Synod.

We are grateful for the work of the British Columbia Synod, whose Initial Comments have been modified for use in the Eastern Synod.



COVENANT FOR THE SAFE RESUMPTION OF IN-PERSON WORSHIP

In the Bishop's letter dated June 8, 2020 he wrote:

For almost three months now we have been physically distancing from one another for the love of our neighbour. That same motivation needs to be paramount as we plan for the future.

This **Covenant for the Resumption of In-Person Worship** is intended to honour that same commitment to love and serve one another. After reviewing the comprehensive resources which have been provided by the Task Force, please complete the following and keep a record for your files:

We have reviewed the Preliminary Consideration for the Resumption of In-Person Worship and the Checklist for the Resumption of In-Person Worship .	
We have developed a plan for the safe resumption of in-person worship in our local context including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Location Preparation ○ Worship Preparation ○ Volunteer Preparation ○ Leadership Communication ○ Hospitality 	
We have reviewed local Public Health guidelines and sought clarification if needed.	
We have reviewed our insurance policy and sought clarification if needed.	
We have developed a communication strategy whereby members can be efficiently contacted in the event of a scheduling change.	
We have developed a plan to encourage reengagement and support those who have newly connected with our faith community by means of virtual worship resources.	

At the direction of our Bishop, a congregation should only resume in-person gatherings at the agreement of the Congregational Council and the Rostered Minister.

We, the Council and Rostered Minister of _____ have
 agreed to resume in-person worship on _____.

Council Chairperson: _____

Rostered Minister: _____

Date: _____