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# **Protocols for the Reopening of Church Buildings to Public Worship**

Revised September 2020

## PREPARING THE CHURCH BUILDING

- **SIGNAGE:** Notices will be placed at the entrance of the church building indicating the maximum number of people permitted in the worship space (250 people or 50% of the room's capacity, whichever is fewer), the conditions of access, and public health guidelines currently in place. Government-issued posters featuring some of this information will be made available.
- **CLEANING:** The worship space should be properly cleaned between uses with appropriate cleaning products (see link to Health Canada webpage in appendix). Special attention should be paid to pews, chairs, lecterns, doorknobs, washrooms, and any other surfaces with which individuals may have come into physical contact.
- **VENTILATION:** If possible, the church's doors should be left open before, during, and after the service to allow ventilation. If a church building has a mechanical ventilation system, its filters should be cleaned.
- **HAND CLEANING:** Hand sanitizer with an alcohol content of at least 60% must be available at the entrance of the church building. If the holy eucharist is to be celebrated, hand sanitizer must also be available near the altar (for the presiding priest), and in a location where members of the congregation can sanitize their hands both before and after receiving communion.
- **TISSUES:** Disposable facial tissues should be available. They should be disposed of in a trash bin with a lid.
- **BOOKS & SERVICE SHEETS:** Prayer books, hymn books, and other such common-use materials must be removed from pews and stored out of reach. Individuals with their own books may bring them to church, but must not share them. Alternatively, prayer and hymn books may be loaned to individuals so long as they do not share them and take them home following the service. A record should be kept of such book loans. Service sheets are permitted so long as they are prepared and left untouched at least 24 hours prior to the service. Individuals must take the sheets themselves and take them home with them.
- **OFFERING PLATE:** An offering plate should not be circulated at any point during the service. Instead the plate can be placed in a location where individuals can put their envelopes or cash offerings on the plate. Those counting the collection should wear gloves to do so and thoroughly wash their hands afterward.
- **SEATING:** Once seated, individuals from different households must remain at least 1.5 metres apart. Markings (coloured tape, for example) should be applied to pews and other fixed seating to help maintain this physical distance.

## DURING THE WORSHIP SERVICE

- **MASKS:** Masks (or other suitable face coverings) must be worn as individuals enter, leave, or otherwise move about the church building. Masks may be removed once a person is seated in their place.
- **GREETERS:** At least one person should remain at the church entrance to welcome visitors, ensure they clean their hands, have a mask, inform them of the worship guidelines, and keep track of the number of people entering the building. A greeter should record the name of every individual attending the service, including any visitors, who should be asked for their email address and/or telephone number for the purposes of contact tracing. Any individuals displaying COVID-19 symptoms should refrain from entering the church building. Extra masks should be on hand for anyone who may need one.
- **SINGING:** Congregational singing is currently considered a high-risk activity for viral transmission and is prohibited. A cantor or soloist may sing during the service, but at a good distance from the congregation. Organ music is permitted, but woodwind and brass instruments should currently be avoided because of the risk of transmission.
- **READERS/INTERCESSORS:** Only one individual should be designated for the reading of lessons from the Bible and the prayers of the people from a lectern. If there is a microphone, it must be used by only one individual during the course of the service.
- **TOUCHING:** All physical contact is to be avoided, including during the exchange of the peace.
- **SUNDAY SCHOOL:** Sunday school or any other activities involving children must currently be carried out in accordance with the COVID-19 standards established for daycare centres by the Quebec government (see appendix).
- **COFFEE/FELLOWSHIP HOUR:** Fellowship which might normally follow a service, such as a coffee hour, may still take place, but no food or beverages may be shared, and masks must be worn and physical distancing respected. Consideration should be given to holding such gatherings outside, in which case masks could be removed.

## CELEBRATIONS OF THE EUCHARIST

- Those who normally prepare the bread and wine for the eucharist, such as altar guilds, should do so at least 24 hours before the service. Only wafer bread may be used.
- Only the presiding priest will be present at the altar and will alone distribute holy communion.
- The presiding priest will sanitize their hands immediately prior to the prayer over the gifts, immediately prior to the distribution of holy communion, and again immediately following the distribution of holy communion. Therefore a separate hand sanitizer should be available to the presider.
- After moving into place for the prayer over the gifts and the eucharistic prayer, the presiding priest may remove their mask. The mask must be replaced before the distribution of holy communion.
- Both bread and wine will be consecrated by the presiding priest. They will consecrate a priest's host and a small amount of wine in the chalice, which they alone will both consume in their entirety before proceeding to the distribution of communion to the congregation.
- At the preparation of the gifts, individual wafers for members of the congregation will be placed on the corporal in a covered ciborium or on a paten covered with a purificator (or other suitable cloth).
- The eucharistic prayer is to be said, not sung.
- Only consecrated wafers of bread will be offered to the congregation. Communion "in one kind" is recognized as a full participation in the eucharist, and is a temporary measure until the normative Anglican practice of sharing the common cup can be safely restored.
- Communion may be distributed in one of two ways:
  1. Communicants come forward to receive
    - After the presiding priest issues the invitation to communion, those wishing to receive will come forward wearing masks, in a single file, maintaining a distance of at least two metres from the person in front of them, and sanitizing their hands before receiving the bread.
    - Holy communion is to be received standing. Communicants will not kneel at or touch the altar rail, but rather stand masked in front of the presiding priest.

- Before receiving the bread, individuals will pause two metres in front of the presiding priest, who will say, "The body of Christ," to which the congregation will respond, "Amen." They will then remove their masks, receive the wafer of bread in their outstretched hands, immediately consume the host, replace their mask, and return to their seat. They may sanitize their hands again on their way back to their place.
- The masked presiding priest will silently place the wafer of bread into the communicant's outstretched hand, making every effort to avoid physical contact. If the presider inadvertently touches a communicant, they will pause, place the wafers on the altar, sanitize their hands again, and resume the distribution of communion.
- If an individual comes forward and wishes to receive a blessing instead of receiving holy communion, they should indicate this by crossing their arms over their chest. The priest will bless them without physical contact.

## 2. Communicants remain in their seats to receive

- After the presiding priest issues the invitation to communion from the altar, they say, "The body of Christ," to which the congregation responds, "Amen." After sanitizing their hands the presiding priest, wearing a mask, takes the consecrated wafers individually to each communicant at their seat. Those wishing to receive communion should stand in their place with their hands outstretched.
  - The masked presiding priest will silently place the wafer of bread into the communicant's outstretched hand, making every effort to avoid physical contact. If the presider inadvertently touches a communicant, they will pause, place the wafers on the altar, sanitize their hands again, and resume the distribution of communion.
  - If an individual wishes to receive a blessing instead of communion, they should indicate this by crossing their arms over their chest. The priest will bless them without physical contact.
- When holy communion is being distributed from the reserved sacrament, the same protocols apply as for a full celebration of the eucharist. Therefore only consecrated wafers of bread will be distributed, and they should remain in the tabernacle or aumbry until the prayer normally said before their distribution is offered by the presiding deacon or lay reader.

## **BAPTISMS, FUNERALS, AND WEDDINGS**

The general protocols outlined above are also to be followed for pastoral liturgies such as baptisms, funerals, and weddings. However, some specific guidelines also apply.

### **BAPTISMS**

- Celebrations of baptism may continue to take place during the principle service of the church community through which the individual is being baptized.
- The baptismal font will be thoroughly cleaned immediately prior to the service.
- Those gathered around the font at the time of the baptism, including the presider, will wear masks. Individuals who are not from the same household will maintain a distance of at least two metres from one another.
- If the person to be baptized is an infant, they will remain in the arms of a family member during the baptism.
- The presider will anoint the newly baptized with holy oil on a clean cotton ball that will be used on that occasion only, and afterward burnt or buried.
- At the appropriate time, a member of the family of the newly baptized will pick up the baptismal candle and light it themselves from the paschal candle.
- The newly baptized should not be processed through the church after the baptism.

### **FUNERALS**

- If a church building is also being used by a family to receive visitors prior to a funeral service (i.e. for the purposes of a wake), public health guidelines are to be followed, including physical distancing and the number of people in the church building at any given time.
- Pallbearers must wear masks while they are carrying a casket.

### **WEDDINGS**

- Parts of the wedding service that would normally involve the presiding minister touching items or people (e.g. blessing the rings, “tying the knot,” etc.) are to be adapted in such a way that avoids physical contact. Similarly, for the signing of the register and other documents, each individual should use a different pen.

## APPENDIX AND RESOURCES

- **Cleaning products and hand sanitizers effective against COVID-19:**
  - <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>
- **Public health guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces:**
  - <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/covid-19/environment/surface-cleaning>
- **Government guidelines for activities involving children (e.g. Sunday school):**
  - <https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/salle-de-presse/covid-19/Pages/outils-secteur-services-garde.aspx>