

St. Andrew's United Church

Reintegration Guidelines for Phasing in During a Pandemic

Date revised: September 28, 2021

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Purpose

St. Andrew's United Church has continued to provide online services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In-person gatherings have been prohibited by provincial order, as part of an unprecedented effort to contain the spread of the virus. In-person gatherings for prayer and worship are now permitted with certain conditions, as described in this document which adheres to provincial guidelines. As St. Andrew's enters the phases of re-establishing face-to-face activities, the focus will be on safety and care for its most vulnerable individuals, including many members who are older and/or have chronic medical conditions. With empathy and thoughtfulness, we will rethink how we provide ministry.

This guidance reflects the current need for protection from COVID-19. As the spread of infection is brought under further control, revised guidance will be issued.

St. Andrew's will adhere to the following:

- Participation of no more than 30% of the capacity of premises. At 30% of capacity, this will be about 60 people. It will be recommended that anyone planning to be present during the service contact the church office each time attendance is planned.
- As a goal, maintaining a distance of two metres/six feet between all persons, unrelated in a family unit.
- Encouraging the use of masks, and requiring that masks be worn while entering the building, remaining in the pews and while singing. A supply of masks will be provided.
- Limiting singing and loud speaking. Plexiglass barriers will separate the minister and/or soloist from the congregation.
- Communion, occurring on special dates of the liturgical calendar may take place with pre-packaged communion elements. Masks may be temporarily moved down to partake of communion.
- Continued cleaning and disinfection.
- Physical contact will continue to be discouraged. (People will be encouraged to greet each other with a smile or greeting, even though masked).

Faith community leaders/organizers are responsible for preventing the risk of infection among staff, volunteers, community members, and visitors who participate in their activities.

Transitioning Phase

In this phase, the premises may be entered and used. Sunday morning services will continue online and may be open to in-person worship with certain restrictive precautions.

Items to be done for this phase:

- Remove seating, or if seating is fixed, mark it unavailable or rope it off to ensure a two metre/six foot distance between rows of seating. Plan the quantity of seating to allow for a two metre/six foot distance between individuals or household groups along each row.
- Remove all hymnbooks, bibles and items in pews that could be handled.
- Post signage at doors to screen anyone who enters the premises, instructing if anyone is feeling unwell or has symptoms of being unwell or who has been in contact with someone with COVID-19 is not allowed to enter. Anyone with even one symptom of COVID-19 should get tested and stay home.
- Add similar information to the organization's website.
- Track movement into and out, using a sign-in-and-out procedure.
- If there is a case of COVID-19 who was contagious while attending services, public health will use that list to notify the place of worship attendees and staff. Church Administrator or Minister will contact attendees in the event that someone has attended or been in the premises while contagious.
- Ensure all water systems are safe to use after the prolonged facility shutdown, and shut off water fountains.
- Develop and post signs for correct handwashing at all sinks.
- Ensure that hand sanitizer is available at all entrances.
- Ensure washrooms are always stocked with liquid soap and paper towel.

Staff and volunteers must report illness immediately to their management, and stay home if they are sick. Persons who become ill while participating in any events at St. Andrew's must go home and [self-isolate](#). They are encouraged to call Telehealth, their health care provider or an assessment centre for guidance about testing.

Staff and volunteers should use a mask/face covering at all times while providing services with other people.

If there are new duties being assigned to staff (an online service as well as an in-person one, additional cleaning, etc.), ensure that the position descriptions are adjusted.

During this phase there may be memorial services or small group gatherings of people on church premises. Number of attendees will depend on current provincial guidelines. Precautions of hand sanitizing, handwashing, masks and distancing of two metres/six feet will be encouraged.

Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection

Disinfectant kills germs on surfaces. Most regular household cleaning products are effective at eliminating the virus. Cleaning and disinfectant products should have an 8-digit Drug Identification Number (DIN) to confirm it is approved for use in Canada.

Check the expiry dates of products and always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Keep products away from children.

Cleaning/disinfection wipes should only be used for surfaces, and according to the manufacturer's instructions. Alternatively, chlorine bleach solutions may be used for disinfection. Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces (e.g. toilets, sinks, door handles, light switches, remote controls).

Educate staff on proper use of cleaning agents and disinfectants, including required disinfectant contact times (amount of time that the product will need to remain wet on a surface to achieve disinfection). Understand safety precautions and requirement for use of mask and gloves.

Ensure adequate ventilation when using products (e.g. open windows, doors, or use fans). Ensure ventilation systems are operating properly, and replace filters as scheduled or sooner.

Wash hands with soap and water immediately after cleaning.

Providing Pastoral Care

Reducing community spread requires reduced contacts and physical distancing. Visits may take place with masks, precautions and full consideration of minimizing risk. Best practices will include:

- Providing pastoral care by telephone or other electronic means.
- Following the guidelines of any health care facility being visited (hospital, or long-term care facility).

Other Businesses or Tenants on Premises

Places of worship that offer free or rented spaces to other groups or businesses must abide by the emergency orders of the provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health, and all applicable public health guidance.

Ensure that any user group returning to the space has a plan for safety, practicing their program in accordance with public health guidelines and sector specific restrictions that apply. Cleaning protocols will be put in place according to their use.

More information

Province of Ontario, A Framework for Reopening our Province: Stage 2, available online at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/framework-reopening-our-province-stage-2>

Halton Hills by-law on masking (in effect until the end of 2021)

Horseshoe Falls Regional Council Proof of Vaccination Requirements