

Doing What is Right – For the Good of All

Galatians 6:9–10

“So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.”

The Covid – 19 pandemic has caused us to change many things about how we gathered and participated in worship as a Community of Faith. A quick change to on-line worship made it possible to continue to gather virtually, but now that transmission rates are lower and vaccination rates are high, we feel that it is time to have a careful and care-filled return to gathering for in-person worship.

A care-filled response to these challenges remains much more than unlocking the church doors and inviting all to come, sit, sing, and greet one another as had been our custom. We know the dangers posed and the risks taken if we were to do that. We care enough not to let that happen.

During this pandemic, love of neighbor requires careful planning and openness to flexibility in response to changing circumstances. Because we love God, we want to offer worship that brings our very best. Because we love our neighbors, we want to do everything we can to make sure we bring no harm to anyone when we gather.

General guidelines and benchmarks for decision-making gathering:


- Rates of transmission in community.
- Vaccination rate in community.
- Size of gathering
- Length of gathering

Because our building has only passive ventilation, we will have to adapt our service and some of the elements which are near and dear to our hearts such as hymn singing, communion, passing of the peace. Please know that your worship team is working to create safe ways of including all aspects of worship and that they will return when it is determined that it is safe to do so. In the meantime, it will be important for us to focus on what we can do rather than what we cannot do.

These general guidelines apply at every level:

- Stay at home if you are not well.
- Vaccinations are recommended for all who are able to be vaccinated.
- Self-quarantine if you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the past two weeks.
- Regularly wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, especially after touching frequently used items or surfaces.
- Regularly clean frequently used items and surfaces.
- Wear masks in public indoor gathering. In particular, the CDC encourages the use of masks in groups where vaccination status is mixed, such as multi-generational gatherings. Children under two, those with breathing problems, and those who are unable to wear a mask because of disability should not wear them.

As we continue to seek wisdom for how to love our neighbors and promote the well-being of all, it is important to use all the resources available to us:

-  Guidance we find in scripture

- ✚ Guidance we learn through our Christian tradition
- ✚ Guidance provided by denominational offices
- ✚ Guidance issued by local, provincial and national public health authorities

Inclusion

The love of Jesus excluded no one.

We all have opinions about vaccination rates, transmission precautions and risks of illness. Some of us will feel that we are being over cautious while others will see us moving too quickly. We ask you to please respect that others may not be ready for handshakes, hugs or sitting close and talking. Please do not feel offended if someone rejects a hug or handshake. They may be protecting someone they love.

Music/Singing

We all love singing our favourite hymns or listening to the choir. Unfortunately, singing has been shown to be a high risk of transmission. We encourage you to find beauty in music from a soloist or small group from choir appropriately distanced and masked. If you feel uncomfortable singing, you might consider humming along to hymns.

What to expect when you come to church:

We know that community and relationships with other members of the community are very important. We urge you to continue to keep in touch with others with phone calls, walks together or other informal events.

- We will continue to have worship available online for those who are unable to or not comfortable with attending in person worship.
- There will be designated entrance and exit doors. Please enter through the ramp door.
- You will be asked to wear a mask, sanitize your hands on entrance and have your name recorded for contact tracing purposes.
- We will not be using an order of service or hymn books. All parts of worship will be projected on the screen.
- You will be asked to remain in your seat and to not move around during the service unless for communion.
- We will have coffee hour only when risks are low and will be seeking input as to how to make coffee hour safe for all.

We will continue to update our recommendations according to guidelines and in consultation with our worship leadership team. The health and safety of our staff and all in our Community of Faith is our utmost priority.

Covid Safety Team: Gayle Ansley, Nancy Cho, James Fraser, Katherine Paton Date: September 5, 2021