



Living Faithfully During Covid 19

A plan for St. James
United Church

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GENERAL GUIDELINES

The general guidelines will apply to any use of St. James whether by staff, congregation members individually or in groups, visitors, or outside user groups.

Health Screening

Anyone who wishes to enter the church building is asked to self determine their health status. If they are showing any symptoms, required to self isolate, or awaiting Covid 19 test results they are asked to not enter the building. Posters are located at each entrance advising people of the current symptoms of Covid 19 and reminding them of this requirement.

Hand Hygiene

Everyone entering the building is asked to wash their hands with soap and water or use sanitizer. Posters reminding people of this requirement are located at each entrance along with sanitizing stations. The custodian will monitor available hand sanitizer each day and replenish as necessary.

There are also posters reminding people of proper sneeze and cough etiquette in different places in the building and instructions on proper hand washing procedures are posted in all washrooms and in the kitchen. The custodian will monitor soap and paper towels at all sinks and will replenish as necessary.

Masks

Everyone entering St. James is required to wear a non-medical mask in accordance with Public Health Orders.

Social Distancing

Posters are located at each entrance and in other places in the building reminding people of the need to maintain distance. The floor is marked in the sanctuary aisles and at the back entrance at 2m (6ft) intervals so that social distancing can be maintained by everyone in the building.

Contact Tracings

The names and telephone number of everyone coming into St. James will be gathered by either the church office or the leaders of the groups using the space. The information will be retained in a safe location for at least 30 days. That information will be made available to NS Public Health in case of the need for contact tracing and will not be used for any other purpose.

Cleaning

Any areas of the church used by groups of people will be cleaned and disinfected by the custodian before and after each use according to the guidelines laid out by Public Health. High touch items (e.g. door handles, light switches) will be cleaned by the custodian at least twice a day when the building is in use. The high touch surfaces will also be cleaned immediately after each worship service. Washrooms will be cleaned and disinfected daily by the custodian and after every worship service.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Online and In Person Worship

Online Services will be offered and the Church Council will reopen the building for in person worship services after ensuring that public health orders can be met, the building is prepared for occupancy, and that the reopening is in the best interests of St. James.

Everyone worshipping at St. James is asked to determine which worship service is best for them to attend. Anyone at risk for complications from Covid 19 (especially those with underlying medical conditions) are asked to consider attending the online service which will be offered weekly along with any in person worship services. The online service will be posted on the website and linked via the congregational social media accounts.

Anyone who is showing any symptoms of Covid 19, is awaiting Covid 19 testing results, or is undergoing quarantine or self isolation is asked to attend the online service and not attend in person worship.

In Person Worship

When the Council decides on a date to resume in person worship services the information will be circulated via congregational social media, website, and telephone tree. Relevant information and instruction will also be communicated by those means. The number of people who can attend in person worship services will be determined by the gathering restrictions put in place by NS Public Health.

Attendance at the in person worship services will be by reservation. Interested people are asked to contact the church office (by telephone or via an online means designated for this purpose) to indicate they will be attending service that Sunday to ensure there is adequate seating. Household contacts and those within a social bubble are permitted to sit together in a spot.

When reserving a seat for Sunday, name and telephone numbers will be gathered by the church office in the event that contact tracing is necessary by Public Health. The lists of those attending will be kept for at least 30 days from the date of service and will only be used for this purpose by the congregation.

If there is enough interest the minister, in consultation with the organist/choir director, custodian, and worship committee, may add another service on Sunday morning so that more people can attend. The sanctuary will be cleaned between services according to the Public Health instructions by the custodian and interested people will have to register in advance for seating.

Procedures For Sunday Morning In Person Worship

Entrance to Sunday worship at St. James is limited to the church doors on Main Street in order to ensure hand hygiene and proper traffic flow. Masks are required for everyone attending in person worship service in accordance with Public Health orders. Everyone entering the building will be asked to sanitize their hands and observe social distancing from those outside their household contacts/social bubbles. The floor is clearly marked to help people keep 2m/6ft from each other. Ushers will confirm seating when people arrive and direct them to the seats.

The seating in the sanctuary is marked to ensure that each spot for individuals/family groupings to sit is social distanced. The pews that are set aside to ensure distancing are roped off and will not be used by anyone. The spots for individuals/family groups to sit are clearly marked and people are asked to sit from that spot toward the aisle to ensure social distancing is maintained. Parts of the pew needed to ensure social distancing between groups of people are also clearly marked.

People are asked to go directly to their seats to allow everyone the opportunity to safely enter while maintaining social distance. Conversation and greetings are welcome and encouraged as we gather but please remember to maintain 2m (6ft) from anyone who is not a household contact. Please refrain from shaking hands, shouting, or singing while in the church building.

The Sunday bulletins will be placed in the pews before the service by church staff. Please only share your church bulletin with your own household contacts. Current NS Public Health direction is that **no congregational singing** can take place during worship. The hymn books have been removed from the pews as a reminder and to facilitate cleaning and sanitizing of the sanctuary.

A solist or small choral group may sing during the service from the choir loft in the marked places. Current guidelines from NS Public Health ask for at least 4m (12 ft) distance for soloists and musicians from the congregation. The congregation will be reminded to not sing along with the solist although everyone is welcome under current guidelines to hum.

Anyone taking part in the liturgy will be instructed by the minister on the place where they will speak to ensure proper distancing is maintained at all times. That may mean a bit more movement in the service than we are used to but will happen to ensure everyone remains safe during worship.

Offering

Offering will be collected in two boxes placed at each exit from the sanctuary. The minister will instruct the congregation on the process. Members of the Finance and Stewardship Committee will ensure the offering is counted in a place and manner so that social distancing for non household contacts can be maintained. Hands will be sanitized or washed after the counting procedures are finished. The offering boxes will be sanitized each Sunday by the custodian.

Dismissal

The minister and ushers will provide guidance at the end of service in terms of how people are to exit. To ensure social distancing both the main door and the back door will be used to facilitate a smooth exit from the building. People are reminded not to visit until they have exited the building and are far enough away to continue to allow people to exit safely. There is space on the sidewalk, on the front lawn and in the hall for people to visit maintaining distance. Hand sanitizer is available at the exits for any who wish to use it before leaving the building.

The minister will not greet people at the door but will be available for those who wish to talk at a safe distance or at a later time.

Coffee Time

At the present time we are not permitted to have coffee, tea, or fellowship. Our hope is that later in the fall this may be possible in some form.

Baptism

Baptisms will be celebrated in accordance with the guidelines provided by Public Health and the United Church of Canada. Normally the water will be only used for one child and the parents would hold the child being baptized in their hands. Every effort will be taken to ensure distancing where possible.

Holy Communion

Holy Communion will be celebrated in accordance with the guidelines provided by Public Health and the United Church of Canada. The elements will either be handed to each individual by a server or placed in the pews before the service. All efforts will be taken to ensure social distancing is maintained where possible.

Children's Worship

Children's Worship will resume in the fall after permission is given by the Church Council. The Children's story will take place within the order of service and to ensure physical distancing the children are asked to stay with their parents until it is time for Children's Worship. The children will then have the leaders show them where to go upstairs.

The Children's worship program will follow the guidelines laid down by NS Public Health following the structure laid out for Day Camps. The children will be assigned to a cohort of 10 (including leaders). Children will be reminded of sneeze/cough etiquette and the importance of hand washing after activities. The rooms used by Children's worship will be marked to ensure social distancing for those not part of the program who may be upstairs while the program is underway. Parents will be asked to wait in the hall (which is marked for social distancing) for Children's worship to finish. The rooms used will be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

OTHER WORSHIP SERVICES

Funerals

Funerals will be conducted under the same basic procedures as the Sunday in person worship. The minister will work with the funeral home and families to ensure that the names and telephone numbers of all those in attendance are taken and that the seating restrictions are followed. When necessary the hall may be used as overflow for these services. Any parts of the church used will be cleaned before and after by the custodian.

Weddings

Weddings will be conducted under the same basic procedures as Sunday in person worship. The minister will work with the couple to ensure the names and telephone numbers of those in attendance is taken and that seating restrictions are followed. Any parts of the church used will be cleaned before and after both the rehearsal and wedding ceremony by the custodian.

USE OF HALL AND OTHER ROOMS

Church Groups

Rooms used by church groups must be booked through the office to ensure the space is available and is cleaned and disinfected before and after use by the group. All groups are asked to consider the space they will need to social distance and whether their gathering might be done in another manner. Everyone attending the gathering is asked to determine their health before they come to St. James and ensure that by coming to St. James they are not putting anyone else at risk.

Everyone entering the building will need to follow the general guidelines laid out earlier around social distancing, hand hygiene and other public health requirements.

The leader/contact person of the groups shall keep a list of all the people who attend as well as the date of the gathering and where the meeting took place. The information will be shared with the church office on the day of the gathering. Such information will be kept for at least 30 days and will not be used for any other purpose than contact tracing by NS Public Health.

At the present time the sharing of food and drink is not permitted for gatherings in St. James. Our hope is that by the fall further public health directives will permit such social gatherings.

Outside Groups

The Property and Trustees Committee will ensure through the church office that any outside groups or individuals looking to use space at St. James are aware of Public Health directives around Covid 19 and providing a safe environment for their participants.

Those interested in using space must show that they have taken steps to ensure the basic public health directives (especially around gathering limits, social distancing, and contact tracing) will be followed during their gathering. They must also agree to follow any and all procedures put in place by Council to prevent the spread of Covid 19. Any groups that do not follow the precautions laid down by St. James and NS Public Health will not be permitted to use space at

St. James.

At the present time the sharing of food and drink is not permitted for gatherings in St. James. Our hope is that by the fall further public health directives will permit such social gatherings.

The Custodian will ensure that the space used by groups is cleaned and disinfected after each use. The Property and Trustees Committee may, at their discretion, charge a fee for the necessary extra cleaning.

STAFF

All staff will self evaluate their health status before coming to St. James. If staff are showing symptoms, are awaiting Covid 19 testing or test results, or if they are required under health orders to quarantine or self isolate they will not enter the St. James building. The staff will contact their M&P contact person in order to inform them of the need to work from home or if necessary to activate the plan for their replacement.

Ministry and Personnel have, in consultation with staff, developed procedures when a staff member is unable to work because of Covid 19. M&P will also keep in regular contact with staff around working conditions and any concerns they may have about this plan and working at St. James during the pandemic.

Staff will work out a plan among themselves to limit contact between staff during the week. This may include staff not gathering for in person meetings or moving to the hall to ensure social distancing is possible. Staff who use the kitchen or other places other than offices will ensure that anything used is sanitized when they are finished.

Normally only staff shall use their assigned office and equipment. Anyone using the offices other than the staff to whom the offices are assigned will be responsible for sanitizing any surfaces touched before and after use. (e.g. computer keyboards, telephone, photocopier keys, musical instruments.)

The Property and Trustees Committee will place barriers in the church office doors to ensure that visitors maintain social distance from staff in offices. The form of the barriers will be determined by Property and Trustees in consultation with affected staff.