

Trinity United Church, Elmira COVID-19 Re-opening Plan

A living document

Version 1

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Trinity Re-Opening Plan Summary What to Expect When Returning to Worship!

Changes and Requirements:

- Stay home if you feel ill
- Face masks must be worn (age 5 and over)
- Enter and exit by the front doors only; no entry to downstairs or rear of building on Sundays
- Seating will be marked off in the pews in order to ensure physical distancing
- A registrar will maintain a list of everyone in attendance
- There will be no congregational singing, no children's programming, and no fellowship time
- The offering plate will not be passed around but will be accessible to drop off offerings
- The capacity limit for each room will be posted outside its entrance



Options for Continuing Worship from Home:

1. At this time, we are planning to record services during the service time and post them online afterwards. A recording will be available after the service for later viewing.
2. Request an audio version of the service from the office, which can be delivered on an MP3 player. You will need a pair of headphones to use the MP3 player.
3. Request a printed copy of the service and sermon, which will be mailed or delivered to your home.

Trinity United Church COVID-19 Re-opening Plan

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This COVID-19 Re-opening Plan (the “Plan”) is meant to represent a living document in order to adapt to changing circumstances associated with the global pandemic. New versions will be disseminated as required by this Plan.

Introduction

The year 2020 has brought with it a global pandemic of a new coronavirus, “COVID-19”. Activities, workplaces, and other gathering places – including churches – were closed across the globe in March, including here in Elmira. Trinity United Church was no exception, and with our faith in God we closed our building doors, but continued the ministry physically distanced, and worked together to prepare videos of worship services hosted virtually, on the internet. Trinity United Church remained “the church”, together but apart. Once COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic in early March, the Trinity Leadership Team formed an ad-hoc committee called the “COVID-19 Team”, to keep abreast of requirements, changes, and determine how best to serve our congregation safely and faithfully.

Beginning in the early summer of 2020, Ontario provincial directives allowed for gatherings to once again take place in religious spaces for worship or other ceremonial practices. The COVID-19 Team has met several times, and reflected frequently and with faith in God, ultimately deciding to re-open the church building for worship services together beginning after Labour Day in September.

Faith community leaders are responsible for preventing the risk of infection amongst attendees of in-person worship services. As such, the following protocol (the “Plan”) has been developed with the aim of preventing infection to the extent possible, while being able to gather to worship and experience God’s presence together. The following are members of the COVID-19 Team who prepared this re-opening Plan: Rev. Sue Campbell, Christy Humphrey (Chair), Peter Kupfer, Mary Feldskov, and Karen Ross (Secretary).

Communication Plan

Due to the restrictions placed on re-opening, it is imperative that the following Plan be communicated as broadly as possible to those who may wish to attend worship services, or who may consider attending. The actions listed below will be undertaken in order to not only disseminate the plan, but ensure it is easily understood, both in advance of first meeting and on an on-going basis.

Plan Dissemination

In all instances of disseminating the Plan, it will be accompanied by a summary of key details (e.g. an executive summary), which is written in a way that is easy to read and understand quickly.

The Plan will be posted on, or linked to, the following web-based forums, clearly indicated and easy to find, once the plan is finalized:

1. The Trinity website. <http://www.trinityunitedelmira.ca/>
2. Trinity’s discussions forum on Facebook, “Trinity United, Elmira, Discussions”
3. Trinity’s public Facebook page, “Trinity United Church, Elmira”
4. The announcements, once the plan is finalized and weekly thereafter. The Plan should continue to be linked to in each weekly announcement, unless or until either a) the Plan is replaced by an alternate guidance document as prepared by the Trinity COVID Team, b) the pandemic is declared over, or c) services are not permitted to be held by order of any level of government.

An Executive Summary of the Plan will also be printed and mailed or delivered to addresses of Trinity members for whom the Church office does not have an e-mail address on file.

Communicating During Worship

Reminder not to attend services if experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19.

The Registrar will provide instructions to attendees on where to go/sit after signing them in.

Encourage hand hygiene and good respiratory etiquette.

Provide an outline for worship at the beginning of each service (e.g. as an introductory slide), highlighting changes to the typical flow of events and activities.

Requirements and Guidance for Re-opening Places of Worship

The following are legislated requirements, as well as guidance from the Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services.

- *No more than 30% of the capacity of the premises may be in attendance, excepting persons under 2 years of age.*

The capacity, and 30% of it, for some of the gathering places in the Church building are:

- Sanctuary: ~ 250; 30% = 75 persons
 - Fellowship Hall: 160; 30% = 48 persons
 - Parlour: 25-30: 30% = 8 persons
- *A distance of 2m (6ft) must be maintained as much as possible.*
 - *Loud speaking and singing are to be limited.*
 - *The passing of objects between persons should be minimized as much as possible.*
 - *Opportunities for incidental/inadvertent touching of potentially shared surfaces should be minimized as much as possible.*
 - *Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting are required.*

As of July 13, 2020, a by-law came into effect requiring masks to be worn anytime an individual is within a place of worship in Waterloo Region. The by-law is repealed as of September 30, 2020 unless extended by Region of Waterloo council. Please bring your own cloth face covering to worship. Face coverings must cover the nose, mouth and chin, and may be non-medical masks, scarves or bandanas.

Preparing for Worship

Why We Gather for Worship

Our building is not God's address. However, the church is the place where we gather to learn the rituals, songs, stories and ways of being together that help us to recognize the divine presence wherever we go. It's the place where we can learn Christ's teachings, take them to heart, and then live them out in our everyday life. We can do this through video services but it's more helpful and healing to do this in person because being in community is where we learn how to be the people of God. By gathering with others beyond our own families and friends, and by learning, working and sharing together, we are encouraged to grow in our faith, are mentored to offer comfort and pastoral care, and are challenged in the ways of social justice. While we recognize the new protocols may be awkward, a little uncomfortable and contrary to our culture of hospitality and community, being in the physical presence of each other can offer hope and healing in ways that distance can't. We look forward to welcoming you back safely.

Coming Together or Participating from Home

The most effective way of preventing infection of COVID-19 is to refrain from gathering in the church. As such, we encourage anyone who may be or feel particularly vulnerable or unsafe attending to participate in services from home. The following are ways to participate in Trinity services:

1. At this time, we are planning to record services during the service time and post them online afterwards. A recording would be available after the service for later viewing as well.
2. Request an audio version of the service from the office, which can be delivered on an MP3 player. You will need a pair of headphones to use the MP3 player.
3. Request a printed copy of the service, which will be mailed or delivered to your home.

Anyone with any single symptom of COVID-19, even if mild, should not attend worship service in person, and should get tested. The most up to date list can be found on the Region of Waterloo Public Health website for COVID-19 (<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx>), but as of the preparation of this Plan, includes:

- cough,
- fever (37.8°C and above),
- shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
- chills,
- sore throat,
- difficulty swallowing,
- runny, stuffy, or congested nose, unrelated to seasonal allergies or other known cause,
- lost sense of taste or smell,
- pink eye,
- unusual or long-lasting headache,
- digestive issues, unrelated to other known cause,
- unusual or long-lasting muscle aches,
- muscle weakness / falling down,
- unusual, extreme tiredness/fatigue
- in children: sluggishness or lack of appetite.

The following are also defined as “at-risk groups for COVID-19” by Public Health Ontario. Anyone falling into these categories should evaluate their comfort with attending in-person services.

- 70 years of age or older,
- Receiving treatment that compromises/weakens the immune system (e.g. chemotherapy, medication for transplants, corticosteroids, TNF inhibitors),
- Having a condition that compromises/weakens the immune system (e.g. lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, other autoimmune disorder),
- Having a long-lasting (chronic) health condition (e.g. diabetes, emphysema, asthma, heart condition),
- Regularly visiting a hospital or health care setting for treatment (e.g. dialysis, surgery, cancer treatment).

We require that anyone who has been in close physical contact with a person who has tested positive or been diagnosed with COVID-19 does not attend. Close physical contact is defined as being less than 2m away in the same room, workspace, or area for over 15 minutes, or living

in the same home. We also require that anyone who has travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days not attend, in accordance with self-isolation requirements for travellers.

It is also recommended that anyone who has been in close physical contact with anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (listed above), or with anyone who has returned from outside of Canada in the last 14 days, not attend.

Preparing Our Space

The following additional control barriers will be implemented to prevent unnecessary contacts:

1. Flagging tape or rope will serve as a visual barrier to keep us in the areas of the Church building that will receive extra sanitizing and separated from other building users on Sunday mornings.
2. Pews will be demarcated or blocked off as required to ensure at least 2m between seating for family units.
3. All books, envelopes, pens/pencils etc. will be removed from the pews.
4. Hangers will be removed from the coat hanging area.
5. Papers, pamphlets, sign-up sheets, etc. will be removed from the tables in the Narthex.
6. The following respiratory etiquette and handwashing sign will be posted in the washrooms: <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/resources/Documents/Help-stop-the-spread-of-germs.pdf>
7. The following signs will be posted at all building entrances. They will also be posted on a stand-alone sign for visibility in advance of reaching the Church front doors, which will be propped open.
<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/8e4b-Screening-poster-retail-entrance-TPH-Tabloid.pdf>
https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/resources/Face-Mask-By-law-Poster_access.pdf

Worship Services

All staff and volunteers are required to be screened for symptoms prior to beginning work on a given day. The registrar, minister or other designated individual may lead the screening activities. Staff and volunteers must report any illness immediately to the Ministry and Personnel Committee (Mary Feldskov, Scott Morlock), and stay at home to begin self-isolation.

The following steps will be undertaken for Sunday morning worship services:

1. All windows in the sanctuary will be opened. In fair weather, the doors to the courtyard should also be left open for the duration of the service.
2. The front doors will be propped open to minimize contact with door handles, until the service begins. Trinity will only use the front doors to access the building for worship services. There will be no access for Trinity attendees to the rear doors, basement, parlour, office, choir room, or children's rooms on Sunday mornings. Only the upstairs washrooms are to be used. A diagram is provided in Schedule I indicating the areas that Trinity will use for worship services on Sundays and those which will be off-limits.

3. Hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol) will be available at the front doors and everyone entering is required to use upon entry.
4. Distancing markers will indicate 2m distance for the front entryway to the Narthex and along the front sidewalk.
5. A registrar will be designated in advance of each weekly service to record the names of all those in attendance, including children. If non-members/those whose contact information the office does not have are in attendance, the registrar will record a phone number along with names of attendees. The registrar's list each week is to be recorded on a pre-determined log sheet and maintained on record in the Office for at least 3 months.
6. The registrar will keep account of the number of those attending service, which at no time shall exceed the limits established by provincial or regional directive. While we don't anticipate exceeding the capacity, if necessary, the registrar shall indicate the building is at capacity and additional entries denied once it is reached (the capacity limit includes the Minister and all staff and volunteers present). As of the date of this protocol, the limit of service attendance is 50 persons.
7. Coffee time will not be held, eliminating a source of close contact.
8. An usher will indicate where attendees may sit.
9. All speakers will use a microphone. Microphones may not be shared. Any announcements are required to be provided to the office before Friday of the week of services.
10. During passing of the peace, all attendees should remain in their location and pass the peace via an alternate means to hand-shaking, such as bowing, waving, "air"/no-contact high-fiving, or smiling.
11. Offerings may be made by placing into a stationary collection plate. The collection plate will be handled by only 1 person during and after the service. Counters to wear masks and gloves and/or wash hands immediately after counting.
12. Due to the high-risk nature of the activity, Communion will not be held until it can be done safely and with precautions endorsed by the United Church of Canada, Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council, and/or the Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services.
13. A choir or band may not perform, excepting solo vocals accompanied by non-wind instruments. Soloists will be a minimum of 4m from the front pews and face sideways if possible or otherwise their vocal trajectory blocked by a barrier, and will not be located in the balcony. When accompanied, all must be physically distanced by at least 2m.
14. Children's programming rooms to be closed until further notice. Children should remain with their parents/family units in the sanctuary for the service.
15. Baptisms are discouraged at this time. If proceeding, additional Personal Protective Equipment will be required.
16. The front doors will be propped open by an usher at the close of service to minimize contact with door handles.
17. At the end of the service, an usher(s) will indicate which rows may exit, beginning from the rear, in order to maintain an exit flow and discourage lingering to chat in the narthex or the pews.
18. Custodian's duties will include additional sanitizing of surfaces in the church as part of routine cleaning. The Custodian will use a checklist, such as that provided by the Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council, to ensure all appropriate surfaces are

Cleaned and Sanitized. Cleaning and Sanitizing will occur with a product or prepared solution on the list of Health Canada’s Hard Surface Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2. (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>). If bleach solution is used for sanitizing, it is to be prepared anew each day.

19. All staff required to use Cleaners or Sanitizers (e.g. the Custodian) will be educated on proper use of cleaners and disinfectants, including the amount of time a disinfectant must be in contact with a surface (i.e. wet) for it to properly disinfect, and safety precautions including use of gloves.

Non-Worship Activities in the Building

Excepting Sunday morning worship, at no time shall the building contain more than 10 individuals.

Everyone is required to sign in to the log book inside the back door upon entry (on Sunday mornings, you will be signed in by the registrar at the front door).

The table below outlines the limits on number of people in rooms within the church to ensure physical distancing and following 30% capacity rules. A sign will be posted on the door to each room with its capacity.

Room	30 % Limit (persons)
Sanctuary	75 (Note: Religious gatherings not to exceed 50 persons)
Fellowship Hall	48
Parlour	8
Large SS Room	6
Courtyard	5
Downstairs Children’s Room	4
Kitchen	3
Library Choir Room Small SS Room Youth Room (upstairs)	2
Administrative Office Minister’s Office Christian Development Office/ Sacristy Furnace Room	1

Notification from Public Health

In the event Public Health contacts Trinity United Church regarding the attendance or possible attendance of an individual with COVID-19 while they may have been contagious, we will:

- 1) Provide the registrar’s list (Sunday mornings) or log book (otherwise) of all in attendance on the date(s) in question,

- 2) Follow all instructions of Region of Waterloo Public Health, which may include instructions for additional cleaning or sanitizing.
- 3) Share information with all building renters.

Schedule I

Areas of Trinity Access for Sunday Morning Worship

