



The Diocese of Algoma

Entering the Amber Stage of “Loving Our Neighbours”

Most of us understand the church is not really a building. According to the Bible, the word “church” speaks of a People. It stems from a term that spoke originally of a gathered people and, while Christians always have used it to refer to themselves even when not assembled, the importance of coming together - especially for the worship of God, the edification and encouragement of one another, and service with and to the surrounding community - has always been central to the word’s meaning, and to our identity as the Body of Christ.

For most of Algoma’s congregations, our buildings play a valuable role in the life and ministry we share. Thus, while we have found ways to worship and serve during the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the closure of our buildings has been difficult for us. As we look to the possibility of reopening and gathering again around word, font, and table, some of us are stirred with joy, others feel nervous with the novel virus still active. Most, if not all of us are certain that whenever we may congregate once more in our facilities, we must ensure we are prepared adequately and do it well.

The resources provided in this post are guided by the following principles:


- a. We rely on the grace and provision of God at all times, and seek to follow wherever Jesus may be leading us in this particular time.
- b. We acknowledge that this plan and its various protocols could change at any time, depending on the path of the pandemic and any new information.
- c. We endeavour to live out our Christian mandate to love our neighbours by making plans that keep the needs of the most vulnerable uppermost in our considerations. As St. Paul exhorted, “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4, NRSV).
- d. We commit to supporting the decisions people in our faith communities make in accordance with their own risk tolerance and respect for others.
- e. We accept that we cannot eliminate risk, but we will do everything we can to reduce it.
- f. We affirm the authority of our Archbishop, and our reliance on one another in the Body of Christ – congregation, diocese, provincial and national church, worldwide church – as we seek to make faithful decisions and take responsible actions together in this period of pandemic.

There have been COVID-19 outbreaks in churches throughout the world. The “3C model” developed in Japan helps explain this.


Important notice for preventing COVID-19 outbreaks.

Avoid the “Three Cs”!

- 1. Closed spaces** with poor ventilation.
- 2. Crowded places** with many people nearby.
- 3. Close-contact settings** such as close-range conversations.




One of the key measures against COVID-19 is to prevent occurrence of clusters.
Keep these “Three Cs” from overlapping in daily life.



The risk of occurrence of clusters is particularly high when the “Three Cs” overlap!

In addition to the “Three Cs,” items used by multiple people should be cleaned with disinfectant.

首相官邸 Prime Minister's Office of Japan 厚生労働省 Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare MHLW COVID-19 Search



Risk of transmission is elevated in closed spaces, crowded places, and close contact. With each added factor, the risk increases. Church gatherings tend to have all three C's. This is why it is important for us to reopen our buildings well and, once they are open, engage in practices that reduce the risk of transmission.

It also is why we require that, where there are variations in guidelines and recommendations issued by public health authorities and diocesan authorities, congregations must go with the more restrictive protocols.

It is acknowledged that there are many notable differences between regions, deaneries, and parishes that will impact decision-making. These differences include but are not limited to:

- The size and condition of our buildings, and challenges around ventilation, aisles and other layout considerations, etc.
- Variations in the degree and impact of COVID-19 in the regions in which our congregations are located, those regions neighbouring our deaneries and diocese, and the places from which visitors and seasonal residents come. (A strong argument for why abundant caution is still the best medicine...)

As we prepare for, and live in the Amber Stage, please note:

- It is the Archbishop's decision whether and when our Diocese moves between red, amber, and green stages of the "Loving our Neighbours" Guidelines issued by Provincial House of Bishops, found here: <https://www.dioceseofalgoma.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Loving-Our-Neighbours-Ecclesiastical-Province-of-Ontario-TEMPLATE-FOR-REOPENING-FINAL-2.pdf>
- It is the prerogative of the parish Incumbent, after consultation with the Territorial Archdeacon, to decide when the parish building will be open for common worship once the Amber Stage comes into effect, and to inform the Territorial Archdeacon of that decision.
- It is the prerogative of the congregation's Incumbent and Wardens to determine when the congregation's building(s) will be open for other ministries and activities.
- Buildings should not be opened for worship or other purposes until the Territorial Archdeacon receives from your parish a completed Amber Stage questionnaire found provided on the Diocesan website.
- Understanding and support should be shown to those who choose not to attend common worship because of their risk tolerance.
- We must take all reasonable measures to protect the most vulnerable, again following the counsel of St. Paul, "...each of you should consider not only your own interests, but also the interests of others..."
- Remember, too, our call to support one another as members of the Diocese, ensuring we do not place one another in ethical compromise or at legal risk as a diocese and its congregations; one decision to not follow protocol potentially affects us all.

Useful Links in Preparing for, and Living in the Amber Stage are provided in a separate document on the Diocesan Website, and as a appendix below.

Please consult the website now and on a weekly basis for other helpful resources to assist you during the Amber Stage.

If you need clarification about anything in the Amber Stage documents, please contact the Diocesan Archdeacon or your Territorial Archdeacon.

If you desire permission for something that is not, or may not be allowed in the guidelines for the Amber Stage, please contact the Diocesan Archdeacon.

Minimum Requirements for Indoor Worship Services

As we move toward reopening our places of worship, we will take the fullest possible precautions to avoid spreading the Coronavirus. This is part of our Christian vocation to love our neighbours as ourselves, not just our fellow congregants, but also the whole community in which we live. The protocols and guidelines concerning common worship, as now set forth, and as they may need to be revised as we move forward, aim to be innovative and effective in establishing new disciplines to prevent transmission of the infection. They also seek to be innovative and faithful in preserving the integrity of the symbolic rituals entrusted to us to form us as the Body of Christ. Innovation and tradition need not be mutually exclusive. As the composer Gustav Mahler once noted, “tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire.”

The following checklist includes essential policies and practices that must be in place before holding indoor worship services. It does not include *everything* that could be done to reduce risk, so each congregation will need to compare this list with the recommendations of their local health units, **always following the guidelines that provide the most protection**. Congregations are encouraged to consult the other checklists for worship provided on this website, and to make additions or adaptations more specific to their particular buildings and circumstances, provided they maintain or enhance protection.

- ✓ Determine how many people can be seated in the worship space while sitting at least two metres apart. Remember to account for both single people and household units, the members of which need not physically distance.
- ✓ The maximum allowed number of people at a single service is the smaller number of:
 - i) The calculated figure from above
 - ii) 30% of legal seating capacity
 - iii) 50 persons.

The number allowed includes all persons who are providing leadership in service.

- ✓ An attendance log for each service must be kept for the purpose of contact tracing. Contact information should be stored safely for a period of three years.
- ✓ Worship space is clearly marked to guide people for entry into the space, to physically distanced approved seats, for receiving Communion, and for exiting the space.
- ✓ Hand sanitizer and, where possible, soap and water handwashing stations are available and easily visible at the church entrance(s) and exit(s). Sanitizer is available in the space, taking particular care to ensure sanitizer is available for the Presider, Deacon, Lector, and any others providing liturgical leadership.

- ✓ Clean masks are made available to persons who do not bring one of their own. All attendees over two years of age are required to wear masks, unless this is contraindicated for medical reasons. Possible exceptions for liturgical leaders are noted in the more detailed checklist for indoor worship.
- ✓ Sidespersons or other persons designated by the Incumbent and Wardens are ready and able to facilitate an entry and exit strategy that maintains physical distancing. Formal processions should not take place if those in the procession cannot maintain physical distancing between one another and with those in the congregation.
- ✓ Congregational singing is not permitted. Soloists or those providing instrumental music must maintain a distance of at least four metres (13ft) from others.
- ✓ If the Eucharist is celebrated it **must** be done in a way consistent with the most current guidelines provided by the Diocese. Churches should take care, if at all possible, that people are not passing one another in church aisles as they partake.
- ✓ The worship space (including washrooms) must be cleaned and disinfected following each use. Pay particular attention to high touch areas such as doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, backrests of pews, lecterns, etc. A list of disinfectants where evidence exists for their use against COVID-19 may be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/health/canada/services/drugshealthproducts/disinfectants/covid-19/list>
- ✓ Service books are not used at this time because they are difficult to keep clean. Worship leaflets, if used, should be placed on seats three days before use, or set on a table by the entry and laid out in a way that a person could pick up one without touching leaflets that will be used by others. This removes the need to take them from a shared pile or have them handed out on Sundays. Those presently in the habit of downloading and printing orders of service for online worship may be encouraged to continue doing so for “in person” worship, too.
- ✓ Washrooms include signage to ensure users are practicing hand hygiene. In facilities with multiple stalls or urinals, every other stall or urinal should be marked off to enable physical distancing.

For congregations needing or desiring more detailed checklists for worship, the following are available on the Diocesan Website:

- Indoor Worship Checklist – Amber Stage (incl. Eucharist and Baptism)
- Outdoor Worship Checklist – Amber Stage
- Wedding Checklist – Amber Stage
- Funeral Checklist – Amber Stage
- Anointing and Indoor Pastoral Visitation – Amber Stage

A link to an instructional video on returning to worship is provided at the end of this document.

Guidance on Reopening for Employees during COVID-19

Under Ontario law, employers have the duty to keep employees and work sites safe and free of hazards. Keeping safe at work involves understanding how people could come into contact with COVID-19 as they perform their jobs, and then taking steps to minimize contact. People such as office administrators, parish secretaries, and maintenance staff are just some of those who need to consider how they can work safely and prevent the spread.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are like many other illnesses, including the cold and flu. At this time, it is recommended that any employee showing symptoms characteristic of cold, flu, or COVID-19 should be sent home, even if their symptoms are mild.

In addition, parishes should advise staff and volunteers to complete the self-assessment (which can also be used by anyone intending to join in your congregation's common worship) provided Diocesan website, or call either Telehealth (1.866.797.0000) or their primary care provider (for example, family physician).

COVID-19 has presented challenges that workplaces have never encountered before. Keep in mind that any adjustments made today may need readjusting tomorrow. Look at preventative measures on an ongoing basis and adjust them if they are not working well enough or causing other issues. For example, are people doing what they have been asked to do? If not, what is preventing them from doing so? Can you make adjustments and improve?

Guidance on Reopening for Licensees / Tenants during COVID-19

Some congregations in the Diocese provide space to a variety of user groups.

Most licensees have use of a defined space for a limited period of time. As the provider of that space, the church must now consider how such spaces will be kept clean to make them safe for users. It is no longer sufficient to ask groups to clean up after themselves and leave the space "neat and tidy". Churches and users alike must ensure they have clarified and been made aware of their responsibilities. In the case of a lease, like a daycare, the user often has exclusive use of a defined space. The lease sets out who is responsible for cleaning (e.g. parish or the leasee).

Use and share the checklists below as you prepare and maintain your facilities according to the guidelines for the Amber Stage. Please remember to compare this list with the requirements and recommendations of your local health units, **always following the guidelines that provide the most protection.**

Parish Offices and Other Spaces – Amber Stage

	Notes	Date complete
Preparing Parish Offices and Other Spaces		
Order all required cleaning supplies and PPE (masks/gloves) for office and staff. Consider purchasing an infrared thermometer (cost usually runs \$60-85).		
Washrooms that are used should be cleaned daily.		
Place hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol content at the entrances and exits, and throughout spaces that will be in use.		
Arrange for high touch points of the office to be cleaned and disinfected twice daily (midday and end of day), and cleaned and disinfected after the use of other spaces.		
Put up posters at entrances educating staff, volunteers, and visitors about what to do before entry if they show or have been exposed to those showing symptoms (COVID-19/cold/flu); sanitizing or washing hands immediately upon entry; putting on a mask before entry.		
Put up posters educating staff on COVID-19; physical distancing, hand hygiene, cough hygiene; use of PPE/masks; what to do if showing symptoms (COVID-19/cold/flu), or if having travelled internationally in the last 14 days must stay home.		
Drinking fountains must be turned off and marked as such.		
Reduce meeting room capacity to ensure physical distancing, or close completely if unable to ensure physical distancing; post signs on meeting rooms advising limits or not to use.		
Close rooms that will not be in use.		
Post signs on photocopier and/or other shared equipment to “Please wash or sanitize hands before and after use.”		
Remove all shared items such as reading materials from lunchroom and waiting areas. Each staff member must wash their own dishes and utensils, or place them in the dishwasher.		

As necessary, rearrange workstations and furniture in other spaces to ensure physical distancing. This may include installing plexiglass barriers, if needed.		
Do not share microphones for meetings.		
Designate how many people will be allowed in a washroom at one time. Post a sign along with floor indicators in the hallway to show physical distance for those who are waiting for the washroom.		
Designate how many people will be allowed in the elevator/lift (if applicable) at one time. Post sign on elevator to advise staff.		
Introduce more fresh air by increasing the ventilation system's air intake or opening windows. Avoid central recirculation where possible.		
Post signs at entrances indicating expectations re: entry to offices by the public. (You are encouraged to allow visitors entry by appointment only.)		
Decide on how many staff and volunteers will return, when, which roles, and the schedule to be followed once returned (if it is different than before buildings were closed).		
Develop your 'Return to the Parish Plan for Staff and Volunteers.' The Synod office plan is offered as an example on the Diocesan website.		
Preparing Parish Staff		
Communicate the Return to Parish Plan to staff and volunteers.		
Communicate to staff and volunteers to keep physical distance at all times, practice good hand hygiene and cough hygiene. Depending on your space, the risk tolerance of those working in church facilities, and/or local health unit regulations, it may be recommended or required that staff and volunteers must wear a face covering when away from their workstations.		
Communicate that staff and volunteers who are ill or who have been exposed to COVID-19 must stay home.		
Communicate to staff and volunteers that they must be symptom-free before returning to the office.		

Communicate to staff and volunteers that if they have travelled internationally in the last 14 days prior to their return to the office or building, they must stay home.		
Communicate to staff and volunteers that if they experience symptoms (COVID-19/cold/flu) while at work, they must go home or work from home.		
Communicate to staff and volunteers the importance of taking care of their physical health, including the need for proper breaks during the day for stretching.		
Communicate to staff and volunteers the importance of taking care of their mental and emotional health.		
Return to Parish Office		
Train staff and volunteers on hand hygiene, cough hygiene, and the proper use of masks and gloves.		
Remind staff and volunteers that they must clean their hands when they arrive at the facilities.		
Remind staff and volunteers to advise their Incumbent or supervisor immediately if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19/cold/flu, and then return home or work from home.		
Remind staff and volunteers to maintain physical distance while at the office and to wear face covering outside of their work area, if required.		
Check in regularly with staff and volunteers to inquire if they are experiencing symptoms and about how they are doing in general.		
Conduct a weekly meeting to advise staff and volunteers on updates, how things are progressing, any concerns or questions, etc.		
Ensure that, for contact tracing if needed, you have a list of staff and volunteers who are working each day.		
Ensure that, for contact tracing if needed, any visitors are signing in and providing full contact information.		

Use of Church Building by Food Sustainability Ministries and 12-Step Groups

	Notes	Date complete
<i>General</i>		
Staff and volunteers must receive information and training about new processes.		
Provide them with access to face coverings and hand sanitizer.		
Ensure people are designated to clean and sanitize high traffic areas, including washrooms, as outlined above.		
Leaders must stay informed as new Public Health guidelines are issued.		
<i>Outside Groups</i>		
Congregations may permit outside groups to use the facility providing they follow all health guidelines regarding physical distancing, etc., and the congregation/rental groups have resources to handle the cleaning requirements between each use. Facility rentals must be suspended if groups cannot or will not adhere to gathering restrictions.		
Request written details as to how the rental group will meet health guidelines, prior to their use of the facility.		
<i>Preparing the facility</i>		
Clean and disinfect high-touch areas and shared surfaces such as doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, faucets and taps, elevator/lift buttons, railings.		
Designate separate (if possible) entrance and exit with signage. If separate entrance and exit is not possible, devise plan for safe entry and exit, and post clear signage and instruction for how this is to take place.		
Place hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol content at the entrance and exit and throughout the facility.		
Put up posters educating visitors about COVID-19 and distancing protocols.		
Close rooms that will not be in use.		

Remove all shared items such as brochures and other reading material.		
To indicate proper physical distancing, rearrange chairs.		
Designate how many people will be allowed in a washroom at one time. Post a sign with floor indicators in the hallway to show physical distance for those who are waiting.		
<i>Food security and other support ministries with vulnerable populations</i>		
For physical distancing, engineer your space to ensure two metres (a little over 6ft) apart for everybody at all times.		
Post hand washing and hand sanitizer instructions where they are easily visible. Make hand sanitizer and appropriate signage available at all entry points.		
Clean the general environment and surfaces that are touched often. First, clean visible dirt then apply disinfectant with suitable contact time at a frequency appropriate for the use of the surface. Set up a system and a schedule, and get everybody on board. For cleaning instructions, see the Public Health Ontario Fact Sheet at www.publichealthontario.ca .		
Face coverings must be worn by staff, volunteers, and clients at all times inside the building, and in any place and time physical distance cannot be maintained. Consider inviting parishioners to supply cloth face coverings that can be given to clients to keep.		

A document with helpful guidelines for **Cleaning and Disinfecting – Before and During Amber Stage** is available on the Diocesan Website.

A document providing a sample **Policy for the Use of Masks** is available on the Diocesan Website.

An instructional video on returning to worship is under development for release in mid-August. In the meantime, you may find it helpful for planning to watch this video by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-NirNbHVE>

Appendix – Useful Links in Preparing for, and Living in the Amber Stage

Stay updated with daily government updates on COVID-19:

Government of Ontario - <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/>

Government of Canada - <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

Public Health Ontario - <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus>

Regional Health Units within our Diocese

These sites provide you with updates concerning COVID-19, protocols and regulations, and various helpful resources relevant to your area.

Thunder Bay Regional Health Unit
<https://www.tbdhu.com/>

Algoma and District Public Health
<http://www.algomapublichealth.com/>

Public Health Sudbury and Districts
<https://www.phsd.ca/>

Timiskaming Health Unit
<http://www.timiskaminghu.com/>

Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux (CISSS) de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue -
<https://www.ciass-at.gouv.qc.ca/en/>

North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit
<https://www.myhealthunit.ca/en/index.asp>

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
<https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/>

Map of Health Unit Districts in Northern Ontario
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-402-x/2015002/maps-cartes/rm-cr06-eng.htm>

COVID-19 Fact Sheet:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf>

When and How to Wear a Mask:

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet/factsheet-covid-19-how-to-wear-mask.pdf?la=en>

Physical Distancing:

<http://www.algomapublichealth.com/media/3405/factsheet-covid-19-guide-physical-distancing.pdf>

<https://www.archchicago.org/documents/70111/2833001/Physical+Space+Planning+Guide.pdf/09da3ef4-8c63-4c41-8a11-f4def3253549>

<https://fwdioc.org/social-distancing-at-mass.pdf>

Handwashing and Sanitizing Posters:

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/J/2009/jcyh-handwash.pdf?la=en>

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet/factsheet-covid-19-hand-hygiene.pdf?la=en>

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/diseases-maladies/reduce-spread-covid-19-wash-your-hands/eng-handwashing.pdf>

Screening Poster:

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/95ea-Screening-poster-retail-entrance-TPH.pdf>

Cleaners Must Be Aware of Public Health Guidelines:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces.html>

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf?la=en>

Effective Disinfectants:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>