



Getting Started

Things to Do and Consider Now as We Prepare for Re-opening our Buildings

We remain hopeful that the re-opening of our church buildings for worship in the Diocese of Algoma will be Sunday, September 6th. A more detailed document with requirements, recommendations, and helpful links will be available by the end of July, but there are things Incumbents, Wardens, and congregations can begin doing and thinking about right now. Of course, prayer is a big part of that! In addition, here are 10 suggested starting points:

- 1. Assemble your team.** Don't presume that all of your greeters, sidespersons, Altar Guild members, servers, etc. will be ready and willing to serve come September. Some may still choose to stay home because of their own level of risk tolerance; others may be raring to go. Can you begin to gauge now who can be called upon? Who will co-ordinate all the steps necessary for safe re-opening?
- 2. Look at your worship space with physical distancing in mind.** How many people (individuals and households) will your space be able to accommodate while keeping at least two metres apart? Is the church building the one best suited for safe re-opening, or do you have a church hall that may work better (i.e. because it has better ventilation, better allows for spacing, etc.)?
- 3. Go shopping.** Odds are, your congregation is going to need some supplies for re-opening. What kind of signs/posters will you use to communicate rules such as physical distancing? (Check the website of your local health unit.) Do you need more cleaning and disinfecting supplies? Will the children need specific space to enable them to stay with their caregivers in worship until Sunday Schools can resume? Are you going to provide clean masks? Do you have enough hand sanitizer? Don't forget that a grant of up to \$500 is available from the Diocese for these kinds of purchases.

- 4. Choreograph.** Do some thinking about how people will enter and exit your worship space in such a way as to maintain physical distancing. This goes for any movement related to the reception of Communion as well.
- 5. Get ready for offerings.** Let's face it – we're probably not going to be "passing the plate" for a long time. Does your congregation have a different way to collect and receive the offering? Do you need to install a drop-box or something similar?
- 6. Attend to Attendance.** We are going to need to keep records of who has come to church for purposes of contact tracing. What method of doing this makes sense in your context? Are you going to ask people to pre-register? Will you leave space for unexpected (or expected!) visitors? Is there one person who can write down names/contact info so not everyone is touching the same pen?
- 7. Divide the Household Chores.** We're going to need to step up our cleaning game. If you already have a paid caretaker, talk with them about how their duties may change, and figure out what they are and are not willing to take on. Where are the gaps, if any? Who will fill them?
- 8. Retrain.** If you are a greeter, what do you do if you can't shake hands or hand out a bulletin? How will the ministries of greeters, lectors, lay readers, sidespersons, and choir members have to change?
- 9. Tune up Communications.** Everyone has questions. How will you communicate with your congregation about what is happening, especially if there are changes? How will you keep in contact with those who are part of your congregation but choose to stay home awhile longer? What systems do you already have that you can use or improve upon for this season?
- 10. Prepare for the Best...and the Worst.** We don't know what our numbers will be like when in-person worship resumes. What will you do if interest in attending outpaces your capacity? What will you do if one or more people in the congregation are deliberately refusing to adhere to the rules? Who will make decisions in the moment to deal with such situations?