



The Diocese of Algoma

Step 3: Reopening Algoma's Churches (*Amber*)

As the excitement builds with the incremental movement toward a “new normal” in our life and worship together, for many a sense of anxiety accompanies our increased contact. Please be assured the following protocols have been carefully thought out and prepared with both the anxiety and excitement in mind, underpinned by the scientific research and health guidance of highly qualified and experienced individuals. We are aware that, since the Diocese of Algoma covers a wide stretch of Ontario and extends into Quebec, not every parish may be in the same situation in terms of the number of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and vaccinations, which may result in variations in local health unit guidelines for their area. When COVID-19 guidance and protocols differ between those of the Diocese and your local health unit, the more cautious guidelines must be followed.

As always, if individual congregations are not yet comfortable with living into the less restrictive worship and pastoral care guidelines presented here, then Diocesan leadership will be supportive of the incumbent's decision to hold off for a few more weeks. Our goal is to gradually and safely emerge together into a time of corporate worship wherein there is confidence of personal safety and deep joy in our fellowship. Therefore, we ask that all congregations be prepared to open for in-person worship, with the appropriate restrictions in place, no later than Sunday, September 12, 2021. As September 12 approaches, incumbents who do not believe this date is manageable should contact Archdeacon Jay Koyle.

As we continue to monitor vaccination levels and the presence of the Delta Variant, these guidelines are subject to alteration. Our hope is that, as we progress together, we will be able to loosen restrictions based on incoming data (case numbers, hospitalizations, vaccination coverage, presence of variants, etc.).

Note: If possible, please continue to provide remote worship options for those people who are unable to attend in person.

Indoor Worship

Capacity: The maximum allowed for indoor worship is whatever number of persons that still maintains at least 2m physical distancing between each individual or social bubble at all times.

Ventilation: Introduce more fresh air by increasing the ventilation system air intake, or opening windows and doors. Avoid central air recirculation where possible. Do not use fans. If the usual worship space of the church building does not allow for good ventilation, but another available space does (example: parish hall), the latter should be used for common worship. While weather conditions permit doing so, congregations are encouraged to worship outdoors. (See section below.)

Masks: Masks must be worn by all persons over 2 years of age who are capable of removing their own face coverings and who do not have a health condition that would contraindicate the wearing of a face covering while inside any church building during worship, or when in the presence of anyone outside of their social bubble. Masks may be temporarily moved aside to share in the bread. Though it is strongly recommended masks be worn at all times, Presider, lectors and intercessors may unmask while speaking if physical distancing of a minimum of 4m is maintained. The Presiding Celebrant must be masked while praying The Great Thanksgiving in proximity to the elements.

Congregational and Choral Singing: Not permitted at this time.

Service books/bulletins: Service books and bulletins may be used. These should be available in the pew racks or placed on pews/chairs before worship by a person with sanitized hands.

The Greeting of Peace: No physical contact outside of social bubbles is permitted at this time. Physical distancing must be maintained.

Passing the Plate: Continue to place one's offering into a plate/other container when entering the worship space. The plate may be presented during the Preparation of the Gifts, followed by the use of hand sanitizer.

Sharing Communion: Continue to share the consecrated bread only, using the protocols previously established by your congregation to safely distribute it.

Socializing (pre and post service): Physical distancing must be maintained and masks must be worn. It is recommended that socializing be kept to an absolute minimum at this time, and must not exceed 25 people, or the number of people that maintains 2m distancing at all times, whichever is the smaller number. Outdoor socials are permitted and recommended (see below).

Cleaning: The intense and stringent deep cleaning required in our first reopening in September of 2020 has been shown to be unnecessary. It does remain necessary for people to wash and/or sanitize after physical contact with anyone, or with any object previously handled by another person. High-touch areas (doorknobs, light switches, railings, elevator buttons, bannisters, the backs, tops and arms of pews, etc.) are to be disinfected between services.

Hand Sanitizer & Extra Masks: Have these readily available to the congregation.

Entrance and Exit: In order to maintain the required physical distancing, implement procedures to ensure the safe seating and departure of the worshippers.

Signage: Signs indicating the use of masks, physical distancing, and the screening procedure must be posted in locations that will be seen by all participants in worship prior to, or immediately upon entering the building. Hand washing/sanitizing posters should be posted in various locations, especially in the washrooms. It is recommended that a “heads up” be posted notifying people they will be turned away if the maximum number of attendees allowed has been reached prior to their arrival. Signs advising worshippers that the liturgy is being live-streamed and/or recorded must be posted, if applicable. In addition to onsite signage, it is recommended information related to pandemic protocols be provided in any or all of the following: the parish website, newsletters, email blasts, Facebook pages or groups, telephone voicemail greetings.

Screening: Passive screening is required for all activities within the church building. This includes posting at all entrances self-screening posters and signage reminding people of requirements concerning mask wearing, hand hygiene, and physical distancing. It is not necessary to take people’s temperature or directly question them about symptoms and travel.

Login Sheets: A record of those persons in attendance – name and contact information – is kept for the 30 days following each worship service.

Remember those parishioners with special needs who may require individualized consideration. Consult with them or their caregivers about needed supports to return safely for corporate worship.

Many of guidelines found in the Amber document on corporate worship issued last summer may be helpful in thinking through worship arrangements for congregations that did not reopen for in person worship last fall, or for congregations that wish to review their practices. Where that document differs from this current Step 3 document, the protocols in this document are those in effect. The Amber document is available here: <https://www.dioceseofalgoma.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Indoor-Worship-Checklist-%E2%80%93-Amber-Stage-incl.-Eucharist-and-Baptism-.pdf>

Outdoor Worship

Capacity: There must be a minimum of 2m physical distance between each individual or social bubble.

Masks: It is not necessary to wear masks outdoors when maintaining the required physical distance between individuals or social bubbles. **Exceptions:** People who are medically susceptible to easily contracting viruses and becoming seriously ill should continue to wear a mask. The Presiding Celebrant must be masked while praying The Great Thanksgiving in proximity to the elements. The Presider or designated Communion minister must wear a mask during the distribution of the bread. Masks must be worn while singing. Greeters/sidespersons must wear masks when functioning in this role. Those who must project their voice in worship (Presider, lectors, intercessors, cantors) should maintain a minimum of 4m physical distancing when doing so or wear a mask.

Congregational Singing: Permitted. Masks must be worn. If possible, distancing greater than 2m between individuals and social bubbles is highly recommended.

Service books/bulletins: Service books and bulletins may be used. If possible, these should be placed on seats prior to the service by a person with sanitized hands. If books or bulletins must be distributed directly into someone's hands, the distributor(s) must sanitize their hands before and after the exchange.

The Greeting of Peace: No physical contact outside of social bubbles is permitted at this time. Physical distancing must be maintained.

Passing the Plate: Continue to place one's offering into a plate/other container when entering into the worship space. The plate may be presented during the Preparation of the Gifts, followed by the use of hand sanitizer.

Sharing Communion: Continue to share the consecrated bread only, using the protocols previously established by your congregation to safely distribute it.

Socializing (pre and post service): Physical distancing must be maintained between individuals or social bubbles. Beverages and food may be served while maintaining the required physical distance. It is recommended that stations be set up – one station per item – in order to achieve this, or that someone circulates to bring beverages to people. Food items should be individually wrapped. People must not congregate at beverage or foods stations. A maximum of 100 people is allowed as long as i) physical distancing can be maintained, and ii) there are sufficient individuals assigned and able to ensure protocols are observed. These individuals are included in the 100.

Cleaning: The intense and stringent deep cleaning that was earlier believed to be necessary is known to no longer be a necessity. It does remain necessary for people to wash and/or sanitize after physical contact with anyone, or with any object previously handled by another person.

Hand Sanitizer & Extra Masks: Have these readily available to the congregation.

Signage: Information indicating the use of masks, physical distancing, and screening procedure must be posted or made available in locations that will be seen by all participants prior to entering the worship area. Hand washing/sanitizing posters should be posted in various locations especially in the washrooms. If possible, it is recommended that a "heads up" be posted notifying people that they will be turned away if the maximum number of people allowed has been reached already in the worship space. Signs advising worshippers that the service is being live-streamed and/or recorded must be posted, if applicable. In addition to onsite signage, it is recommended information related to pandemic protocols be provided in any or all of the following: the parish website, newsletters, email blasts, Facebook pages or groups, telephone voicemail greetings.

Screening: Passive screening is required. In whatever manner most suited to the congregation's outdoor setting, people must be informed about when they are expected to wear a mask, and reminded to perform hand hygiene and maintain the required physical distancing. It is not necessary to take people's temperature or directly question them about symptoms and travel.

Login Sheets: A record of those persons in attendance – name and contact information – is kept for the 30 days following each worship service.

Remember those parishioners with special needs who may require individualized consideration. Consult with them or their caregivers about needed supports to return safely for corporate worship.

Funerals, Weddings, Baptisms

Wedding and funeral rites will be conducted according to the above guidelines for indoor or outdoor worship. For the specific guidelines regarding baptism, please refer to relevant section in the Amber Stage Worship Checklist: <https://www.dioceseofalgoma.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Indoor-Worship-Checklist-%E2%80%93-Amber-Stage-incl.-Eucharist-and-Baptism-.pdf>

Other Uses of the Church Buildings

Remote or outdoor meetings remain a safe option, especially if any person attending the meeting or event is apprehensive regarding the possibility of transmitting/contracting the COVID-19 virus.

If using the church buildings for meetings or gatherings, masks must be worn at all times, and 2m of physical distancing maintained between individuals or social bubbles. The serving or sharing of food and beverages is not yet permitted indoors during official church activities.

A logbook recording the name and contact information for each person present at meetings, and for anyone else entering the building besides those whose normal duties involve their regular presence in the facilities (ex. clergy, secretary) will be kept for 30 days after each meeting/gathering.

Outside Groups: Congregations may permit outside groups to use the facility providing they follow all health guidelines regarding physical distancing, masks, and heightened hand washing/sanitizing. Outside groups are expected to maintain their own logbook.

Indoor Pastoral Visitation

The Diocese of Algoma Amber Stage Checklist for indoor pastoral visitation has been revised. You will find it here: [Anointing and Indoor Pastoral Visitation – Amber Stage \(Revised\)](#)

Pastoral visitors will maintain a record of individuals visited for 30 days after each visitation.

Fundraising

The Diocese of Algoma Amber Stage policy on fundraising remains in effect. You will find it here:

<https://www.dioceseofalgoma.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Amber-Fundraising-2021-08.pdf>

A logbook must be maintained for 30 days following each event.

Questions may be addressed to

The Ven. Dr. Jay Koyle,

Diocesan Archdeacon and Executive Officer

(705) 256.5061, x. 3

congdevelopment@dioceseofalgoma.com