



The United Church of Canada L'Église Unie du Canada

First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council

Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council

Regional Council 15

MEMO

To: Communities of Faith, Ministry Personnel, Board/Council Chairs and Regional Members

From: Rev. Faith March-MacCuish, Regional Executive Minister, First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council, Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Regional Council and Regional Council 15

Date: April 30, 2020

Re: **COVID-19 Regional Update (April 30, 2020)**

Recovery Plans to Reopen

As some of our provinces are beginning to relax restrictions and begin their recovery process, it is important that we follow the regulations set out by the health and government authorities. At this point, we are not able to open our church buildings, but those who wish to go to their churches to have a live service may do so within the allotted provincial numbers. It is important for us as Communities of Faith to model good citizenship and comply with the health care and government authorities' directives and, more to the point, it is important to do our part in keeping ourselves and other safe.

As each province or government will have different strategies in place for its recovery plans to reopen, we cannot have a one size fits all plan for The United Church. I have compiled what the provincial and Bermudian government plans have in place to date with some recommendations for our Communities of Faith at this time. As these policies may change frequently, it is the provincial/government guideline that we will follow closely.

As discussed yesterday in a gathering of church leaders, let us not jump too quickly into beginning activities as usual, for if we do move too quickly we may go into a second wave and all that we have done and all the sacrifices we have made will be in vain. As well, simply adhering to government and public health directives and guidelines, which are of utmost importance, may not be enough. We need to keep in mind our context, including the types of activities we host, and the age and health demographic of participants. The Staff Leaders Team of General Council with the direction of the General Secretary, are currently working on some guidelines that will be released next week to help us when the health and government officials allow us to begin to have gatherings again.

I have included information in this communication for each province and Bermuda, indicating where we are at the present moment. Please make sure you check the link to your province or government's directives before making any changes. If you are having wonderings about the wisdom of those directives please do not hesitate to be in touch. As information changes and the guidelines are developed remember, these are tools to help you, our Communities of Faith to reopen. You and your governing bodies will certainly have to make decisions about how you wish to reopen once that is permitted and what guidelines you will need to implement for the safety of all of our congregations and ministries.

Quebec:

Currently in Quebec, churches are not permitted to be open, and no more than 2 people in the building at any time for any reason. An update will be made after May 7, 2020.

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/>

New Brunswick:

Please see the link below and in particular **Page 8 for Outdoor Religious Services. At this point, our buildings are not permitted to be open for gatherings and therefore washrooms will not be available to people who come to the Drive in Services.**

If you are not able to have Outdoor Religious Services in keeping with the restrictions, you should continue to offer services as you have been during the isolation period. There was a meeting between church leaders and government officials for NB, and Health NB will be giving us more information for our churches as they are able.

Please see page 8 in the link below for details of the restriction on the Drive in Services.

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/COVID19_recovery_phase-1_guidance_document-e.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3RtQRfsoF0iXeceYaSzWZNri1xY4xj18YCfi_NaSbOqC8PWYXCnVz9o_s

Prince Edward Island:

Four Phase Renew PEI, Together:

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/renew-pei-together>

Phase three has some implications for our churches and will potentially begin on June 12, 2020, allowing slightly-larger indoor and outdoor gatherings:

Potential to re-introduce gatherings of **no more than 15 people indoors**, and **20 people outdoors** (for example, **religious gatherings**, large families having visitors or playing frisbee in the park)

- maintain physical distancing with individuals who are not part of one's household
- permitted to share equipment among individuals from different households when necessary and with precautions (e.g. soccer ball, library book, trying on clothes)

Churches in PEI are to remain closed for gatherings until at least June 12, 2020 and at that time there is a limit of 15 people inside and 20 people for an outdoor religious gathering. If you are not able to adhere to the restriction of social distancing with the limit of 15 people inside or the 20 people outside, please continue to offer service as you have been doing in this time of isolation.

Nova Scotia: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/>

The same restrictions remain in place for NS as the recovery plan has not been circulated as of today's date on the government website. There will be a further update as we know more. It looks like these restrictions will remain in place with further updates after the May long weekend (May 19, 2020).

Churches will remain under the same restriction until a further update after May 19, 2020.

Newfoundland and Labrador:

The Province of NL will release its plan on April 30, 2020 for its phases of reopening. This communication will be updated when we have more information.

Churches will remain under the same restrictions until a further update.

<https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.nl.ca%2F%2F%2Fresources-2%2F&data=02%7C01%7CFMacCuish%40united-church.ca%7C64d27209de684b50319108d7ecf155ae%7Ccf18b5a826784011931215f0f7157574%7C0%7C0%7C637238393577713934&msdata=0a8AsjRzhM10Eq8R4QuLFuPuHckif54OLGzL%2Fk0wR80%3D&reserved=0>

Bermuda:

The current *shelter in place* regulations are extended for an additional two weeks, through to May 2, 2020. Churches will not be open until it is permissible through a directive from the Government and Public Health Emergency Response Team. Although Bermuda will begin its four phase reopening process on May 2, 2020, church openings will not begin until the third phase and we do not have a timeline for that. Churches will be following the government guidelines.

Please see link below:

<http://www.caribbean360.com/news/bermuda-extends-covid-19-lockdown-records-death-number-5/#ixzz6L1cFYFZt>

The Regional Council Offices will remain closed at this time, with staff continuing to work remotely. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Faith March-MacCuish

Executive Minister