



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

Ideas and Information Advent and Christmas Generated from the Town Hall Webinars

Decorating for Advent and Christmas:

It is perfectly fine to decorate for Advent and Christmas.

Once the decorations are in place they should not be touched until it is time to take them down.

How can we decorate and keep those decorating safe?

You can have one family bubble do all of the decorating.

You can choose different families to do different parts and this way you will be including more people in the festivities. (ex. If you ask a family to hang the greens and put up the empty Christmas tree, then you can leave that for 72 hours and then ask another family to put up the lights and the ornaments, etc.)

Each family would be given a schedule and be given instructions to wipe down the places they have touched. (ex. The pews they sat on or laid the boxes of decorations in, light switches washroom is used, etc.)

Ideas for services:

- Online services pre-recorded
- Livestream services
- Drive in services
- Outside services
- Services through Zoom
- Multiple services in the sanctuary
- A week of Christmas Eve services

Have parent video their children doing their part in a service from home and put all of the pieces together (reading scripture, sing a song) for a pre-recorded white gift service to show in church for white gift.

Have children draw pictures to illustrate the Advent/Christmas season, and then turn that into the service, through PowerPoint etc.

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Have three Christmas Eve services starting on Dec 22, 23, 24 to accommodate as many as possible. You can potentially have the same service each night, or have a theme for each service.

Have people sign up, so we know how many people we will need to prepare for, and how many services to have.

Advent Candle Lighting:

Have families record themselves lighting the Advent candle and show it in church.

Ask the families/people who are lighting the advent candle, to tell their story, offering witness to each other and to community about something that has given them (Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace) during this difficult time of COVID.

Worship Ideas:

Christmas Eve: three services in one day. Possible to give people an opportunity to worship at Christmas time, provided that all of the cleaning protocols can happen and still have the balance of care for the clergy, lay leaders and volunteers.

How do we accommodate those who we only see at Christmas time and make sure they are included when we have small churches? Can we have more than one service the same day?

Yes. You can have more than one service a day. It is important to clean in between the services. Allow 30 minutes after the service for the aerosols to settle after people leave and then clean (this will give a little extra protection to your cleaners. Cleaners should be masked and gloved while cleaning). If you are able to leave 30 minutes for the surfaces to dry before the next service that would be a bonus.

Outside services for hanging of the greens singing carols; outside masked and distanced.

Decorating outside of the church and have some Christmas music playing.

Outside Tree lighting.

Walk through nativity scene as the service.

Send out battery lighted candles and liturgy so families can have an at home liturgy.

Propane fire in the parking lot. Have people gathered to celebrate. (Masked and distanced)

Recording service (The Christmas pageant) in a barn to be shown later. The service can be put in PowerPoint and shown on Christmas Eve.

What do we do with people after the service, who do not want to leave and are wanting much needed social time? It is a good idea to have as part of your plan ushers who have people start from the back of the church pew by pew letting people leave. If people wish to chat they can do so outside, with a reminder to remain masked and to distance from those not in their bubble. It might help if this were part of the announcement a few times before the service.

FM Transmitter might work for extra people in the fellowship hall, extra screens for viewing. Drive in service might work well, use the FM transmitter so people can be in church and in their cars.

If you do not have the volunteers to do multiple services on Christmas Eve, maybe do more services over the Advent season.

Christmas Eve through zoom. That way everyone can come into the service together and experience worship at the same time.

In the smaller country church setting, an idea is to have a torch lighting and go from house to house outside and share the Christmas story, sing carols outside, masked and physically distanced. Then move to the next home. At the last station, provide cocoa or cider, so that people can have a social time at the end. You must have a small group of servers, masked and with sanitized hands. The participants would have to stay in their car and be served, or be two meters apart while they drink unmasked

Is there a recorded Christmas Eve Pageant that congregations can use and have space for the congregation to add their own scripture readings? Would there be a more commercialized service we could use? There are ready to go pageants but would have to record your own. You can record through Zoom, then you could share it as a pre-recorded service. There may be Christmas YouTube videos that might be available. This may require some time searching those out.

Don't forget to check in with your Sunday School teachers and youth group leaders to see what ideas they have for programming for Advent and Christmas. They are very creative.

Communion:

Is it ok to have a hybrid of ways to do communion? ex. 1/3 of the congregation on line, 1/3 in person and those who cannot do either have the service in written form to follow at home and have communion from home at the same time as church. It was felt that this was a viable option.

December 27th Service:

Worship Service developed by the Regional Council Presidents and staff for December 27th, for use in the Regions.

Recordings at each congregation on the Pastoral Charge, readings etc. and have the choir record singing (physical distancing and masked). Put all the pieces together to be aired on December 27th.

Outreach:

Food Bank: Each day in advent have people put an item in a box a then at the end of Advent giving the box to the food bank.

Have a pre-recorded white gift service and ask families to contribute each part. Then on Sunday have congregational members watch the service and ask people after the service to drive up to the church and drop off their white gifts in a bin. Put the bin aside for 72 hours and then you can distribute the items to the ministries that need them.

Fundraisers:

Packages of Christmas Cards made from the scenes from the Christmas Pageant in the Barn.

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Registering for church:

Have people call the church and sign up, sign up through email, or use a program such as **Eventbrite**. A program that you can use for people to sign up for events and church services. Does *Eventbrite* have a free option? Yes! Both the Essentials and Professional products are free for **free** tickets — you are only charged each time you sell a paid ticket. Organizers with only **free** events have access to everything in Essentials, and everything in Professional except for phone, chat, or email support.

Questions for further deliberation:

How to clean microphones in an effective way during the church service when having to share microphones?

<https://www.guitarcenter.com/Microphone/Microphone-Foam-Sanitizer-Bottle.gc>

<https://www.amazon.ca/Hosa-GLS-104-Microphone-Accessories/dp/B0042Y57U8>

<https://churchtechtoday.com/2020/03/20/7-steps-to-a-clean-microphone/>

When people are asked not to come to church when they are sick does that also apply to staff? What if you have symptoms and you have a COVID test which comes back negative but you still have symptoms, do you still stay home? When the minister gets sick, how do we handle the situation? Does the governing body have a plan?

Yes, it does. Stay home, if you have more than one symptom call 811 and they will direct you. I will seek further clarification as to when you should return to work. My understanding to date is 24 hours after you are symptom free, even with a negative COVID test.

It is important for the Pastoral Charge to have a plan in place for when the minister gets sick. Who will lead the service and handle the Pastoral Care.

Staying in touch with the Congregational Members:

1. Some are using daily/weekly blogs
2. Some are producing newsletters for distribution
3. Some are using phone calls and phone trees for checking in
4. Some have been using Mail Chimp to communicate with their members (This is also the tool used for the Wednesday announcements for RC15 and FSLDW)

Future Town Halls:

Request to have a check in like this in a couple of weeks just to see how everyone is doing. After Christmas, have a Town Hall about how to have Annual Meetings in the pandemic.

Live Streaming:

Question about children and Livestreaming. Permission and policies on how to do that, as well as permission for children taking part in pre-recorded services.

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We have been asked about whether there are guidelines for Pastoral Charges who would like to live stream their worship services and those who wish to post services on the Facebook page. The Copyright Guidelines document of the United Church, while it covers copyright permissions related to music, it does not cover the issue of permission of people in the congregation during the live stream.

Permission:

It is important that members of the congregation are aware that the service is being live streamed. If the congregation has agreed to live stream the service, generally the only people on camera are those that come to the front.

Those coming forward to take part will need to know they will be seen over the internet. If they do not wish to be seen on the live cast they should decline taking part. For those under 18 taking part during children's time, pageants, or reading a lesson, it's important that parents have given consent, either verbally or in writing. If a parent does not give consent then the child cannot be part of the live streaming or Facebook posting. If posting pictures on the church's website or Facebook page it is important to have the verbal or written permission from the parents if the children are under the age of 18.

How to choose a Mask:

Non-medical masks should: allow for easy breathing, fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops, maintain their shape after washing and drying, be changed as soon as possible if damp or dirty, be comfortable and not require frequent adjustment, be made of tightly woven material fabric (like cotton or linen), be large enough to completely (and comfortably) cover the nose and mouth without gaping.

A mask should be made of at least 2 to 3 layers of material (3 layers is best, but masks with 2 layers are still effective). Consider wearing a mask that includes a pocket to accommodate a filter or filter material like a paper towel to provide another layer.

Non-medical masks shouldn't: impair vision or interfere with tasks, be made of non-breathable materials, be made of plastic, be secured with tape or other inappropriate materials, be made exclusively of materials that easily fall apart, such as tissues, be shared with others, have exhalation valves. Masks with exhalation valves are not recommended, because they don't protect others from COVID-19 and don't limit the spread of the virus.

Resources

Copyright:

Copyright Guidelines:

https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/handbook_copyright-guide-congregations.pdf

Voices United Hymn in the Public Domain:

https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/voices-united_pd_the-united-church-canada.pdf

More Voices hymn with United Church Copyright:

https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/more-voices_the-united-church-canada.pdf

Worship:

The United Church of Canada Advent Unwrapped: <https://www.united-church.ca/worship-theme/advent-unwrapped>

The Uniting Church in Australia: <https://sa.uca.org.au/intergen/church-resources/all-age-worship/all-age-church-season-worship/christmas-services>

The United Church of Christ: <https://www.ucc.org/worship/worship-ways/year-a/ace>

<https://adventconspiracy.org/>

<https://www.kairoscanada.org/spirited-reflection-celebrating-advent-peace-and-international-human-rights>

Canadian Churches that Live-Stream Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/676613006560597>

Other Resources:

The Prayer Bench: <https://prayerbench.ca/>

Ukulele Church:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=10158857593362250&set=gm.1782865048532236>

For the zoom link, email Catherine Stuart cstuart@united-church.ca

The Go Project: <https://ucrdstore.ca/.../the-go-project-advent-curriculum...>

United Churches for Dartmouth on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOFRVVaqpZZd5gjmfyFgMsA?fbclid=IwAR0WujFDDp_vmcuoxKDG_oKouLyzRqC_OQWQ2zLizhTLsyGaz3DUESwcTo&app=desktop

Pacific Mountain Region: <https://www.pmrfirstthirdresources.ca/>

Advent in a Box: <https://buildfaith.org/advent-in-a-box/>

Flame: <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/search?q=Christmas>

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Illustrated Ministry: <https://store.illustratedministry.com/>

Stone Nativity: https://frugalfun4boys.com/nativity-story-stones/?fbclid=IwAR3CUrFArbjedq1111hIEC7cYqVEikFfNuiSy4cgULN-RuQGt-8z_5kAWkA

Praying in Colour: <https://prayingincolor.com/the-season-of-the-nativity?fbclid=IwAR0w5RyCNyXLcEooCjJhwUt5uuiID7twPrdrRQ9Kp6n1AB1IoEC6ezEPlgg>

Messy Church: <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/tags/advent>

Art Spark: <https://artsparkca.wordpress.com/>

United Church Pen pal Project:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfZMMYSaoWpXVqmWzhhFIZbpsBmbRF8yDEiYc_0KFgcsXV4Og/viewform

Sackville United's Zoom with Santa: Email: zoom2020santa@gmail.com

Masks Information:

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/masks/>