



The United Church of Canada L'Église Unie du Canada

Regional Council 15

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February 16, 2021

Dear Members of Regional Council 15 (NS)

Please see the following letter received from Dr. Strang on Sunday, February 14, 2021. A very special thank you to Dr. Strang and his team for giving us the tools we need to keep each other safe. There are new updated guidelines for faith-based gatherings and guidance for vocalists and Instruments. Please go to the links in the body of the letter for more information.

- Any **singing** should be done by identified choirs or groups; congregational singing and chanting should be limited or not allowed at this time. Alternatively, suggest congregants hum along to the vocalist, instrumentalist or pre-recorded music. **(Please see link for guidelines for vocalists and instruments)**
- Gathering limit with [social distancing](#) for **meetings** and training (indoors and outdoors) - 150 people maximum for outdoors and 50% of the venue's capacity up to 100 people maximum for indoors when meetings and training are hosted by a recognized business or organization. **(This includes Annual Congregational Meetings)**

Please make sure you have your COVID plan in place and that people are aware of the plan. The same plan needs to be followed for any gathering in your buildings.

Dear NS Faith Leaders,

In follow up to the Zoom call I had with some of you on Friday, I would like to provide updated information in a few areas.

- 1) *In collaboration with the NS Choral Federation we have revised our guidance for musicians and for faith-based gatherings to be somewhat more flexible for singing and musicians. We will continue to review the Public Health guidance in these areas as our epidemiology evolves. The current documents can be found at:*
<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19-Guidance-for-Vocalists-and-Instrumentalists.pdf>
<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/Faith-based-gatherings-guidelines.pdf>
- 2) *On Feb. 5th we announced an opening up of a variety of other gatherings with allowed numbers the same as faith gatherings have been at since Dec. 21st. The new restrictions are in place until 11:59 pm March 7th and we will be reviewing the ability to loosen things some more the week prior to that. Given recent experience in New Brunswick and Newfoundland, I anticipate keeping gathering sizes low will need to be maintained for a while yet. Current gathering limits are outlined at <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/restrictions-and-guidance/>*

If faith groups are allowing their facilities to be used by other groups and organizations for meetings and events, then it is important that it be clarified who the “recognized business or organization” responsible for meeting Public Health requirements is.

3) *I have received a number of inquiries regarding serving food and beverages for the congregation after services, at special events or for groups using the facility. Such food service can happen under the following general guidance:*

- *Gathering limits must be maintained the people involved in on-site preparing and serving are included in the overall gathering numbers*
- *eating and drinking should only be done while people are seated; there can be no more than 10 people seated together and tables need to be separated by at least 2M*
- *avoid self-serve and buffets except if it is pre-packaged, single serving food/beverages; have food/beverages served by the minimum number of people possible*
- *while serving food and beverages, physical distancing, masking and [hand washing guidelines](#) are followed*
- *all requirements for food service permits and food safety training need to be met*

4) *Child care programs that are part of faith gatherings should follow the provincial before and after school program guidance: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19-Public-Health-Guidance-for-Before-and-After-School-Programs-2020-21.pdf>*

If the children and staff in the child care program do not attend portions of the faith service and are in a separate room then their numbers are not included in the allowed number of people in the faith service.

*Dr. Robert Strang
Chief Medical Officer of Health
Department of Health and Wellness*

Thank you for doing your part to help minimize the spread of the Virus. Take care of each other. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to be in touch: fmaccuish@united-church.ca

With appreciation,

Faith

Rev. Faith March-MacCuish
Executive Minister
Regional Council 15
The United Church of Canada