



The United Church of Canada L'Église Unie du Canada



First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council
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First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council Covid-19 Update **March 26, 2021**

Dear Members of First Dawn Eastern Edge Regional Council,

As we make our way towards our Palm Sunday, we have much to celebrate. As of tomorrow, we are permitted to have a larger number of people back into our sanctuaries. The people of this province have much to be proud of. We pulled together, and in just six weeks we were able to flatten the curve on the biggest outbreak that the province has seen since COVID-19 has come to our shores. How then do we move back? SLOWLY.

We have seen how quickly things can change, and we only have to listen to the news to know that COVID-19 is still at our doorstep. Make sure you update your re-entry plan. It is important to note that the current Level 2 is not the previous level two. Your written plan needs to be posted so that your congregation is aware of the changes. Please make sure your plan follows all of the guidelines set by the health authorities and the Region.

Alert Level 2

Public Spaces and Gatherings:

- Formal gatherings, run by a recognized business or organization, are limited to no more than 50 people.
- Physical distancing must be maintained.
- Informal gatherings are limited to only those in your *Steady 20*.
- Places of worship may host services and faith-based activities of no more than 50 people. This limit includes officiants, staff and volunteers. This means we are permitted to re-enter our churches with a maximum of fifty people. That means only fifty (50) people in the building at one time.
- Gatherings at funerals, burials, weddings, and religious and cultural ceremonies are limited to no more than 50 people, including the officiant.
- Public visitations are permitted, with one household bubble visiting at a time. Wakes are prohibited.
- Informal gatherings are limited to only those in your *Steady 20*.

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Guidance for All Alert Levels

To best prevent the spread of COVID-19, places of worship are encouraged to continue hosting services and faith-based activities online or through [drive-in services](#).

Social gatherings that normally occur before and after a service (e.g. communal dinners and lunches) need to be avoided at this time.

Masks are required and must be worn for the full worship service, including when seated, in accordance with the [Special Measures Order](#).

Know the Risks

Faith-based services pose a risk of COVID-19 transmission through:

- Gatherings;
- Sharing of ceremonial objects, communion; and
- Singing.

We also know that individuals over 60 and those with chronic conditions are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

To support public health contact tracing efforts in the event that an attendee at the place of worship tests positive for COVID-19, **Public Health requests organizers to ask individuals to voluntarily provide their name and contact information when attending faith-based activities and events in person.** Faith-based organizations will have full ownership of their attendance lists, and will only be asked to share attendance lists with Public Health if a potential exposure occurs. Lists can be discarded after 30 days.

Promote Physical Distancing

- Physical distancing of two metres (6 feet) must be maintained between participants. People from the same household bubble can sit together without physical distancing.
- Use visual cues to support physical distancing, such as floor markings and [posters](#). Verbal reminders of physical distancing are also recommended.
- If multiple gatherings are held on a single day, the start and end times must allow for attendees who are exiting one gathering to avoid contact with those arriving for the next gathering. There must also be sufficient time for cleaning and disinfection between gatherings.
- For more guidance, please see [Physical Distancing for Businesses](#).

Enhanced Sanitation

- For guidance on cleaning, see: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/Covid-19/files/factsheet-Covid-19-environmental-cleaning-NL.pdf>

- Provide Health Canada approved hand sanitizer (these typically contain at least 60 per cent alcohol) near the entrances and exits and throughout the place of worship in high traffic areas. Signage should be posted asking congregants to use sanitizer.
- Increase cleaning and disinfection of commonly contacted areas, including: Seating; Doorknobs; Railings; Light switches; Elevator buttons; and Ceremonial objects.
- Washrooms should be open, but increased cleaning and disinfection must take place. Ensure washrooms are always supplied with liquid soap and paper towels, and that warm running water is available. Contactless garbage bins should be available and emptied frequently.

Higher Risk Activities

- Handshaking, hugging, touching or passing objects between people, or other forms of physical contact are not permitted.
- Passing collection plates is not permitted. Alternatives can be considered, such as online donations or a depository to accept offerings.
- Faith-based rituals requiring physical contact between people should be changed to maintain physical distancing. Masks must be worn.
- Common use items such as books and hymnals may be used if set aside for at least 24 hours between uses. However, projecting materials or distribution of single-use materials should be considered, and congregants encouraged to bring their own items. Discard of printed materials after the service is complete.
- If touching of ceremonial objects is required, individuals should perform hand hygiene before and after touching the object. They should not kiss, embrace, or press their faces on any shared ceremonial objects.
- Handheld microphones should not be shared, unless they are disinfected between uses. Limit the number of people providing readings or other activities that need a microphone.

Sacraments

Communion:

- Serve in pre-packaged or individual portions.
- Have a small number of designated servers.
- Servers and recipients must not have physical contact.
- Servers are required to wear a non-medical mask, and wash or sanitize their hands immediately before and after serving.
- Recipients are also recommended to wash or sanitize their hands before and after consuming.

Baptism

- For infant baptism, the parents should be the only ones to hold the baby.
- The officiant will sanitize hands before the baptism.
- For infant, child and adult baptism, water cannot be shared. Not a common font. If possible, have a separate bowl that sits in the font for each individual who will be baptized.

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Congregational Singing and Choirs

- Congregational singing and choirs are not recommended.
- You may have a soloist or a small group lead the singing for you, with at least 2 meters between singers and the congregation.
- Encourage congregants to hum softly to the hymns rather than singing. For guidance on singing and playing wind/brass instruments, please see <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/information-sheets-for-businesses-and-workplaces/group-singing-and-wind-instrument-playing/> (see section, singing in faith-based communities)
- Children's programs are not recommended at this time. If you are going to have children's programs please make sure you follow After School Programs approved guidelines.

Pastoral Care

- This is an important conversation between clergy and the M&P Committee
- In Person Pastoral Care – What situations will warrant in person care?
- Be cautious and limit the interaction you have with varied groups of people.
- Visiting multiple institutions, hospitals, Nursing Care Homes, exposes staff, their families and others to many people.
- You must follow the regulations of the institution; check before going.
- Make sure you have prior permission before visiting someone in their private home.
- Make sure you keep a list of those visited and when.

Personal Practices

- You should complete the [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) before visiting a place of worship.
- You should stay home if you are sick.
- If you are over 60, or have an underlying medical condition, you should consider delaying your return to your place of worship. Continue to participate in services online, if possible.
- If you have travelled anywhere outside of Newfoundland and Labrador in the past 14 days, you need to self-isolate and are not permitted to visit the place of worship.
- Wash or sanitize your hands often.
- Practice cough and sneeze etiquette, and avoid touching your face.
- You are required to wear a non-medical mask, including when seated, in accordance with the [Special Measures Order](#).

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to be in contact.

Faith

Faith March-MacCuish
Executive Minister

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