

**Overview:**

This document is an initial pathway for a **staged approach** in re-opening the church after the COVID-19 Shutdown. The plan is based on what we currently understand of *A Framework for Reopening our Province (3 stage approach, April 27, 2020) Ontario government*, and what we glean from other relevant literature and public health principles. **Any plan for reopening will need to remain flexible and adaptable in this ever evolving situation.** This document is simply a place to begin. **All plans for re-opening are subject first of all to the direction of public health and provincial government authorities.**

Given the contagious and virulent nature of COVID-19 and the vulnerability of our aging congregation, the most important aspect of re-opening is to **maintain an “err on the side of caution” approach to decision-making.** For example, due to the ongoing risks involved, the church may choose to stay closed to larger gatherings, despite government permission to the contrary.

It may be that larger group gatherings will not resume until much later and may even be delayed until there is an effective vaccine available. It is difficult .... challenging, to come to the realization that the ways we have met together and used our buildings in the past, is significantly changed for the foreseeable future. There will be many details to work through. Be kind and generous to one another as you work together on solutions to perplexing questions. May the love, peace and grace of God guide you at each stage. In each of the **3 stages of A Framework for Reopening our Province**, **the following are of prime importance:**

- Continued protections for vulnerable populations
- Continued practice of physical distancing, hand washing and respiratory hygiene, and
- Significant mitigation plans to limit health risks.

As well, the **5 Principles for Every Situation** from B.C’s plan for reopening (adapted below) is another simple model to consider a variety of scenarios.

Personal Hygiene	Environmental Hygiene	Stay at Home When Sick	Safe Social Interactions	Physical Modification Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand hygiene</li> <li>• Respiratory Hygiene: Cough into sleeve, dispose of tissues</li> <li>• Do not touch face</li> <li>• No handshaking / embracing</li> </ul> <p>? use of non-medical masks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More frequent general cleaning</li> <li>• Enhanced high-use surface cleaning</li> <li>• Personal office space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-monitoring for symptoms</li> <li>• <b>STAY AT HOME – not negotiable</b></li> </ul> <p>Self-isolation for returning travellers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small numbers in group settings</li> <li>• Maintain physical distance (min. 6')</li> <li>• Consider room size</li> <li>• Calculate the safe number of people for each space</li> <li>• Is it possible to meet outside?</li> </ul> <p>Consider how to support Public Health contact tracing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spacing in the physical space</li> <li>• Movement of people within the space</li> <li>• Maintain one way traffic in with another exit whenever possible</li> <li>• Traffic flow in and out of rooms, along corridors, especially note plans for rooms with only one entrance i.e. offices &amp; washrooms</li> </ul> <p>Ventilation – filters, air exchanges, open doors &amp; windows when possible</p>

Risk Assessment / Possible order of Re-opening / Considerations				
Area of church operations / Date	Concerns / Risks/ Anxieties	Pre-conditions & Restrictions	Physical Spaces / Meetings	Communications / Signage
<p><b>1. Church staff &amp; Church Office</b></p> <p>DATE: ???</p> <p><b>Stage 1 in Framework:</b>  <b>FOCUS: Staff Health &amp; Safety</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff personal health</li> <li>Home &amp; family life</li> <li>Vulnerable family members</li> <li>Anxiety re returning to shared spaces</li> </ul> <p><b>Risk is relatively low when all principles &amp; conditions are met</b></p> <p><b>HWC has made note of the Mental Health Benefits of staff returning to the workplace.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional pre-cleaning in the building (offices, washrooms and kitchen)</li> <li>Heat / A/C filters changed and air flow equipment serviced</li> <li>Define regular general cleaning - frequency / specifics</li> <li>Plan for daily cleaning of high use and public use surfaces</li> <li>Cleaning solutions: Lysol or water and Javex solution 10:1</li> <li>Custodial Staff hand and eye protection worn during cleaning</li> <li>Additional closed Garbage cans</li> <li>Staff will clean personal high use surfaces (keyboards, phone, door handles) min. twice daily</li> <li><b>Initially – as a time of adjustment, request no visitors – doors will remain locked.</b></li> </ul> <p>Log in will continue at the courtyard entrance – staff and visitors will sign in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office space is personal space</li> <li>All meetings will take place in lounge (or as an alternative prayer room)</li> <li>Maintain min. 6’ distance between staff</li> <li>Develop traffic flow patterns – unidirectional wherever possible</li> <li>Washrooms one person at a time</li> <li><b>? Wear masks when meeting together (under consideration)</b></li> </ul> <p>Attendance Record will be kept of all meetings – one person will create the record; records kept for one month (this is to assist with contract tracing if it is needed)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitors to the church</li> <li>Visitors call ahead and log in</li> <li>Visitors only for needed &amp; specific purpose</li> <li>No wandering about the building</li> <li>Respect Traffic flow through common spaces</li> <li>Washrooms – vacancy signage</li> </ul> <p>Always respecting min. 6’ physical distance</p>
<p><b>2. PiE Office</b></p> <p>Date: 1 week after # 1 above</p> <p><b>Stage 1 in Framework:</b>  <b>FOCUS: Staff Health &amp; Safety</b></p>	<p>Discuss with PiE staff – re risk of shared office space; personal comfort level of returning; strategies for alternating use of the office?</p> <p><b>Risk is relatively low if all principles &amp; conditions met</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As above</li> </ul>

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<p><b>3. Small Groups (&lt;10)</b></p> <p>DATE: TBD</p> <p><b>Stage 2 in Framework</b></p> <p><b>FOCUS: Health and Safety of participants</b></p>	<p>Risk is moving toward moderate even with all principles &amp; conditions met</p> <p>&gt;Group size =&gt; risk</p>	<p>As above</p> <p><b>Space will be suitable to group size</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine / Calculate the safe number of people for each space</li> </ul>	<p>As Above</p>	<p>As Above</p>
<p><b>4. Worship – modified numbers of people</b></p> <p>DATE: TBD</p> <p><b>? Stage 3 in Framework; may be much later</b></p> <p><b>FOCUS: Health and Safety of participants</b></p> <p>Consider Sunday School – adult and children separately</p> <p>Consider ongoing anxiety about return to public worship - ?? continue alternate means of joining with technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vulnerable population</li> <li>Large family connections therefore many possible contacts for each person</li> <li>Church family accustomed to intimate greetings &amp; socializing</li> <li>Common Social activities, sharing food and drink, singing.....</li> <li>Persistent societal anxieties</li> </ul> <p>.Ability to assess participants for symptoms</p> <p><b>. Higher Risk even with all conditions met</b></p> <p><b>. Unlikely to be soon</b></p> <p><b>Limit size</b></p>	<p>Group size as directed by public health</p> <p>.Establish traffic flow patterns – unidirectional whenever possible</p> <p>.Wearing of masks???? (under consideration – supply???)</p> <p>.Consider risks of singing together... mitigate risks of shared music... (ideas and creativity)</p> <p>.Remove hymn books, bibles and unnecessary paper from pews</p> <p>.Cleaning before and after any use of sanctuary (all increased general cleaning assumed, as defined)</p> <p>.Cleaning between services if St. Pauls worshipping afterward</p> <p>.Maintain detailed attendance records (attendance &amp; seating – log-in, photos???) – to assist with contact tracing; keep for one month</p> <p>.Ushers roles..- seating, directions re anyone who is obviously ill....</p> <p>.Response to illness during gathering</p>	<p>Seating – spacing (min. 6’ distance)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every other pew</li> <li>Mark off spacing with red and green tape</li> <li>Seat front to back</li> <li>Leave back to front</li> <li>Home family units together</li> </ul> <p>15 Minute Social time in place in sanctuary after service, maintain min. 6’ distance</p> <p>Develop traffic flow patterns for sanctuary - Is there a safe way to do unidirectional flow?</p> <p>Music, scriptures - Copy for single use, use of a screen / projection (Oh, my!!)</p> <p>Ventilation: Open windows / doors when possible</p> <p>Possibility of splitting congregation (Ben / other pastors discussing)</p> <p>Separate space for most vulnerable</p> <p>Consider St. Pauls</p>	<p>Hand and respiratory hygiene</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traffic flow</li> <li>Physical Distancing</li> <li>Education in advance</li> <li>Weekly reminders of behavioural expectations</li> <li>Self-monitoring information available</li> <li><b>. Stay home if ill</b> messages</li> <li><b>.Clear, Consistent signage:</b> use of red, amber or orange, and green appropriate to message (Stop, Pause, Go)</li> <li>Washrooms – vacant, occupies signage</li> <li>Do not overdo signage ..</li> <li><b>Other:</b> Use of Lift</li> <li><b>Deacons:</b> Communion, Eternity Sunday</li> <li><b>Worship:</b> ???</li> <li><b>Offering:</b> at back</li> </ul>

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<p>5. Worship – Groups over 50 people</p> <p>DATE: TBD</p> <p>? Stage 3 in Framework – may be much later</p> <p>FOCUS: Health and Safety of participants</p>	<p>As above</p> <p>Higher Risk for droplet spread</p> <p>Higher Risk even with all principles &amp; conditions met</p> <p>Liability</p>	<p>As above</p> <p>Consider: 5,6, &amp; 8 below may be delayed until effective vaccine is available..?</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>6. Larger group rentals (IMCC, choirs, family, funerals)</p> <p>DATE: TBD</p> <p>? Stage 3 in Framework – may be much later</p> <p>FOCUS: Health and Safety of participants</p>	<p>Higher Risk for droplet spread</p> <p>Higher Risk even with all principles &amp; conditions met</p> <p>Liability</p>	<p>As above</p>		
<p>7. Rentals / gym use for physical activity</p> <p>DATE: TBD</p> <p>? Stage 3 in Framework – may be much later</p> <p>FOCUS: Health and Safety of participants</p>	<p>Higher Risk for droplet spread</p> <p>Higher Risk even with all principles &amp; conditions met</p> <p>Liability</p>	<p>Small groups with additional spacing might be considered once public gyms and recreational spaces are open...??</p> <p>i.e. House of Friendship, WALC</p> <p>Ventilation...</p>		
<p>8. Silver Spoons Lunch</p> <p>DATE: TBD</p> <p>? Stage 3 in Framework – may be much later</p> <p>FOCUS: Health and Safety of participants</p>	<p>Vulnerable population</p> <p>Higher Risk even with all principles &amp; conditions met</p>	<p>Challenge of kitchen volunteers / spacing in the kitchen and spacing at the tables</p>		

### **Additional Notes / Considerations: (Always maintain agility and adaptability in the face of a changing situation)**

- Keep an eye on Vulnerabilities / compliance with behavioural expectations / manage anxieties / manage spiritual distress
- Establish monitoring of any outbreak in the congregation (signs of need to re-assess / shut-down)
- Monitoring for outbreak at WMHomes
- Ongoing access to hand hygiene supplies – establish supply
- PPE for Parish Nurse and Pastor (define use... establish supply)
- Regular communications with church family / reminders of 5 principles and personal practices
- Access to non-medical and medical masks (medical for PN)
- Develop criteria for PN Clinics and Pastoral Care visits – new normal... evolving situation??
- Add general concepts of Recovery Plan to Pandemic Plan (Post peak strategies & Post-Pandemic recovery)
- Evaluation post pandemic – Deacons and HW Committee, Vision Team .... (Lessons Learned...? Establishing “new normal”?)

### **References:**

6 Tips to respond to employee anxiety about COVID-19, Canadian Mental Health Association, 2020 <https://cmha.ca/news/6-tips-to-respond-to-employee-anxiety-about-covid-19>

A Framework for Reopening our Province, Ontario, April 27, 2020 <https://www.ontario.ca/page/framework-reopening-our-province>

B.C.'s Plan for Re-opening, CBC News report, Address by Premier of B.C, May 2020

COVID-19 INFORMATION GUIDANCE FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP, Alberta Government, May 2020

Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response: A WHO Guidance Document. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK143063/>

Risk-informed Decision-making for Mass Gathering during COVID-19 Global Outbreak <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/mass-gatherings-risk-assesment.html>

United Church of Canada Emergency Plan, March 2020, Community of Faith Guidelines for Health Related Situations, table pages 13-14

W-K United Mennonite Church **DRAFT #2 Re-opening Plan / Process COVID-19**

Health and Wellness Committee: May 14, 2020

WHO Getting Your Workplace Ready for COVID-19, March 19, 2020 <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>