



Suggested Guidelines for Offering COVID-19 Aware In-Person Worship and Ministry Programming Fall 2021

Positive Prevention Measures

Basic precautions that Communities of Faith implement can keep in-person worship and ministry programming as low-risk settings for COVID-19 transmission. Our choosing to put positive prevention measures in place helps ensure we are supporting the health and wellbeing of others in our community.

Everyone should stay home if they are sick or feeling unwell.

Encourage anyone with illness symptoms to use the Alberta Health Services (AHS) [COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Albertans](#) to know if they should seek testing for COVID19.

Everyone should clean their hands frequently, especially before touching faces.

Washing with regular soap and water reduces the spread of illness. If soap and water aren't available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content can be used on hands that are not visibly dirty.

Everyone eligible should be encouraged to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. (i.e. have received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine with more than 14 days have passed since their second dose)

Vaccinations are the best prevention measure against COVID-19

Faith leaders play an important role in encouraging those eligible to get vaccinated, including through sharing trusted information sources (such as this document) and having open and respectful dialogue with those who are hesitant.

Consider how those unable to join you in-person can still connect to ministry

Not everyone will be immediately comfortable to returning to in-person worship and programming. As well, some people may have been able to newly connect to your ministry because you offered online ministry or distributed printed ministry resources.

Consider how these people can still connect with ministry.

Masks: it is recommended that everyone 2 years and older wear a mask during in-door activities and ministry.

While being double vaccinated reduces the risks of transmission, and drastically reduces the likelihood of severe disease, masking can continue to prevent the spread.

Keep things clean.

Regular cleaning and disinfecting can help prevent the spread of illnesses. Frequently touched surfaces such as toilets, sink tap handles, doorknobs, light switches and tables should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily. Other surfaces should be cleaned regularly and when visibly dirty.

Communion Single-serving communion is recommended.

Pre-cut bread served using tongs or gloves, and individual communion cups served at the front (as opposed to passed along the rows) is one possibility. Some congregations have purchased pre-prepared, single service communion packages. Some are considering distributing a grape and wafer in a ziplock baggy.

Attendance Lists for Worship and Ministry Events

While faith communities are no longer required to keep a list of attendance at worship and ministry events, such lists may be helpful in the event of an outbreak to contact attendees afterwards.

Offering/Donations.

It is recommended to encourage online offerings and/or opportunities to deposit donations into a receptacle upon entry or leaving.

Serving Food and Beverages.

COVID-19 does not appear to be transmitted by food contaminated with the virus. However, basic food safety practices need to be followed for preparing and serving food and beverages

Food Preparation: Ensure those preparing food clean hands often and are not sick. Also, Food Safe Level 1 Certification is now offered online through various accredited organizations. The course is a helpful resource for education and training on basic food safety practices.

Serving: Buffet-style serving and large groups at tables are now allowed but communities of faith may want to decide if they are ready for such events. It is important to ensure that:

- those serving food clean their hands often and are not sick
- those being served clean their hands before using common touch items (like tongs or serving spoons at a buffet) and before eating
- high-touch surfaces (like tongs or serving spoons) are cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- Also, encourage participants not share food and to continue giving others space.

Children, Youth, Young Adult and Family Programming

First Third Ministry has provided detailed guidelines for communities of faith
[Please download the COVID-19 Guidelines from the First-Third Ministry website](#)

A Basic Summary of Guidelines: Stay home if you're sick, wear a mask, wash your hands, sanitize high use/high touch areas.

- While First Third Ministry staff believe strongly that all ages worship God together, having separate worship areas for those yet-to-be vaccinated (many under 12) and the vulnerable (our community elders) will be necessary to prevent the spread of COVID in our communities. Consider having children and family ministry outdoors while the weather keeps and the opportunities your building offers for separate entrances.
- continuing hybrid and virtual worship when possible is recommended.
- Consider how you can include children and families in virtual worship services.

What information can I give people who are feeling hesitant about getting vaccinated?

Ministers and lay congregational leaders play a critical role in providing accurate messages to congregational members about COVID-19 vaccinations. The following link provides reliable information including vaccine safety, effective and more. <https://www.alberta.ca/covid19-vaccine-myths-and-facts.aspx>

Also, if you've heard a comment or information that's not at the above link? You can post a comment on [AHS's COVID Fact or Fiction](#) and an AHS expert will provide information to validate or debunk the information as fact or fiction.

The above is compiled with resources from Alberta Health Services, BC Centre for Disease Control, previously prepared documentation from Chinook Winds Region and the First Third Ministry Network for children, youth, young adults and families.



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