

**Two Rivers Pastoral Charge
(Bayswater-Summerville, Long Reach, and Westfield United Churches)
Covid-19 Operational Plan**

Summary

This plan was prepared in June 2020, based on information available at this time from the Government of New Brunswick. It was developed by an Official Board Committee consisting of Rev. Kate Jones, Ross Sherwood (Westfield United Church), Amber Graham (Westfield United Church), Catherine Cole (Long Reach United Church), and Bette Ashley (Bayswater-Summerville United Church).

This plan was approved by the Official Board of Two Rivers Pastoral Charge on July 27, 2020 and is open to updating as more is learned about Covid-19, as new Pastoral Charge programming is developed, or as Government recommendations and requirements change. All changes will be noted and dated.

The Government of New Brunswick “Recovery Plan” is colour-coded, moving from Red (strict controls to flatten the curve and contain the virus as quickly as possible) to Orange (balancing the reopening of businesses and activities while preventing a resurgence of transmission) to Yellow (reopening of more businesses and activities after the ability to control transmission has been demonstrated) to Green (after a vaccine is available or more is learned about how to protect people from the virus). In this plan, gatherings of 10 or fewer people with physical distancing, as well as outdoor religious services are allowed in the Orange phase; while religious services, weddings, and funerals with 50 or fewer people are allowed in the Yellow phase.

Background

The leadership of Two Rivers Pastoral Charge (Official Board and Session) met on March 13, 2020, two days after the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 to be a global pandemic, and six days before the Province of New Brunswick declared a State of Emergency. At that meeting, a small group was named and empowered to make decisions about closing the Pastoral Charge as needed, on behalf of the whole Official Board.

On March 15, in-person worship happened (with precautions in place such as hand sanitizer and physical distancing) with the service from Westfield United Church streamed on Facebook for those unable to or concerned about attending in-person. After that day, all worship services have only been streamed with no in-person congregation.

On March 19, after a State of Emergency was declared, the three church buildings were closed, and provisions were made to function as the church away from our buildings.

In late April, the Government of New Brunswick began gradually re-opening the province, and at a meeting on May 12, the Official Board named a sub-committee to look at re-opening our buildings and preparing this operational plan.

In late May, with easing restrictions, some outdoor physically-distanced gatherings began to take place within the pastoral charge, however the buildings remained closed and much of the work and mission of the church continued online and by telephone and mail.

Operational Plan – Overview (from gnb.ca)

The purpose of an operational plan is for a business/service/organization to address public health measures during the Covid-19 pandemic in New Brunswick. The Operational Plan needs to address the following key Public Health measures, which are applicable in all phases of the recovery plan:

- **Physical distancing (minimum distance of two metres)**
Maintain a minimum distance of two metres between yourself and others at all times, with the exception of members of the same household or “bubble”. People must not congregate in groups; which will impact our daily routines, business operations and recreational activities.
- **Frequent and thorough handwashing**
Practice proper hand hygiene including good handwashing practices. Proper handwashing requires regularly and thoroughly washing your hands with soap and water or minimum 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Cleaning surfaces properly**
For households, regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. Regular household cleaners, disinfectant wipes or a diluted bleach solution can be used according to the label directions.
- **Respiratory hygiene**
Practice good respiratory hygiene. When you cough or sneeze, do so into a tissue; dispose of the tissue and wash your hands afterwards. If you do not have a tissue available, cough into your sleeve or elbow.
- **Community face masks**
Wearing a non-medical mask, also referred to as a community face mask, is required when unable to maintain physical distancing in the community (e.g. grocery stores, pharmacies, etc.).

In addition, the following Public Health Measures apply to all businesses, educational institutions, organizations, and service providers across all phases of recovery:

- **COVID-19 Operational Plan**
A COVID-19 operational plan must outline how daily operations will be managed. Each business/institution/organization must have an operational plan in place that outlines how they will manage the safe opening and operation of their business, service, or organization. This plan must follow the guidance and requirements of Public Health and WorkSafeNB and you may be asked to share your plan with the proper authorities.

- **COVID-19 Awareness**
 Signage must be posted on proper hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and physical distancing throughout your facility and outdoor settings as applicable. How this is applied will vary depending on the facility, but signage is required. At a minimum, signage should be placed at all common entrances and where people tend to congregate.
- **Active or Passive Screening of Employers and Patrons**
 You should advise any staff and patrons who are either symptomatic, and/or have been advised by Public Health to call TeleCare 811 to report their symptoms, to self isolate, remain home, and not enter the premises. You should also actively pre-screen staff before the beginning of each shift by using the Screening Questionnaire for COVID-19. In addition, posting information on COVID-19 symptoms will help to enable and reinforce passive screening of patrons.
- **Physical Distancing**
 Patrons and staff must not be permitted to congregate in groups. Patrons must always maintain a minimum of two meters between themselves and others, with the exception of members of the same household or “bubble.” This may result in alterations to how your workplace is set up, how activities would normally occur, or how patrons and staff would normally interact and go about business. Situations where close contact cannot be avoided might deserve special considerations for mutual protection such as installing a Plexiglas screen at the cash or another type of physical barrier. Community masks or other forms of protection may be used as a last resort.
- **Cleaning and Disinfection Procedures**
 Ensure that all common areas are cleaned and disinfected twice daily, or more often as required. As an example, items such as countertops, chairs, light switches, public washrooms, and doorknobs will need to be disinfected more frequently throughout the day. Regular household cleaners, disinfectant wipes, or a diluted bleach solution can be used according to the label directions. Use disposable gloves when cleaning surfaces. make sure that other staff and patrons are removed from the area during clean-up.
- **Facilitating Personal Hygiene Etiquette**
 Operators will need to ensure that they are enabling thorough and frequent hand hygiene for patrons and staff by posting signage and making sure basic supplies are provided.
- **Handling of Money**
 Use of electronic payment devices are preferred with possible; however if you must handle money, always ensure regular handwashing and have minimum 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer readily available. Do not touch your face after handling money.
- **Supplies**
 Operators must ensure that they have all the necessary supplies. It is important that a staff member be delegated responsibility to monitor supplies to ensure stock is maintained.
- **Washrooms**

Where public washrooms are available, they must be equipped with hot and cold running water under pressure, liquid soap, paper towel, toilet paper, and garbage containers. Handwashing signs must be posted.

- **Handwashing Stations**

Handwashing stations should enable handwashing by providing clean water, soap, paper towel, and a disposal bin. In the absence of this, minimum 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be made available if possible. Handwashing signs must be posted.

Two Rivers Pastoral Charge Operational Plan for Worship (including weddings and funerals)

- There will be clearly marked areas 6 feet apart outside the entrance for worshippers to wait or they may choose to wait in their car.
- Entrances: Only one entrance will be available at Bayswater-Summerville and Long Reach United Churches. Two entrances will be available at Westfield United Church – the main door will be the primary entrance, and the side ramp will be available for anyone with mobility difficulties.
- Worshippers will be requested to self-screen before coming to worship. The screening questions (Appendix 1) will be circulated by email before the first worship service in the sanctuary, and at regular intervals after that.
- A Greeter wearing a mask will be at each door. They will greet the worshipper, and ask the worshipper if they have any COVID 19 symptoms. The screening questions will be posted near the entrances.
- If no restrictions arise, the greeter will explain the protocols being used including:
 - Maintaining physical distancing (6 feet apart) when moving to and from the pew
 - Use hand sanitizer that is on table by the entrance
 - Coats and hats are to be taken to the pew
 - Location of the bulletins. Attendees will be asked to put their used bulletin in a recycling bin provided, or they can take them home. Please do not leave them in the pews.
 - Location of the collection plate.
 - Direct the person to the next available pew. Worshippers will be seated beginning at the front of the sanctuary and moving to the back.
 - In order to maintain physical distancing, every third pew can be used and the other pews will be roped off. Each pew can hold one household or “bubble”; or two un-bubbled individuals, sitting at opposite ends of the pew.
 - All washrooms will be available, however worshippers will be asked to be aware of physical distancing when accessing the washrooms.
 - When the service is over the attendees will be asked to exit pew by pew starting at the back and go directly to the parking lot or their vehicle. The minister or worship leader can greet them outside on the steps, weather permitting. (At Westfield United Church, any worshipper requiring the ramp will be asked to remain in their pew and exit the church once the others have left.)

- The exact capacity of each sanctuary depends on whether the worshippers are attending as a household or “bubble”; or whether they are un-bubbled individuals. At Westfield United Church, there are 7 pews available (4 on the right; 3 on the left as viewed from the back of the sanctuary) with the possibility of one more “bubble” or 3 un-bubbled individuals in the choir chairs. At Long Reach, there are 6 pews available (3 on each side) with additional seating for 2 un-bubbled individuals in the center of the center pews. At Summerville United Church, there are 7 pews available (3 on the right, 2 on the left and 2 at the front, as viewed from the back of the sanctuary), minus one if the organist is sitting at the organ.
- The greeter will record the names and phone numbers of all worshippers at each service, in case these are required for contact tracing. These lists will be stored in a secure location for 21 days before being shredded.
- Each congregation will be asked to have a plan in place to ensure that physical distancing is enforced. Ideally, we will not need to turn anyone away from worship at the door.
- There will be no Coffee Hour, reception, or other social gathering before or after the worship service, due to the difficulty in maintaining physical distancing as well as the increased risk when serving food or beverages.
- Masks are strongly encouraged when arriving at and leaving the church, however may be removed once seated in the pew and physical distancing can be maintained.

Regular Worship Service details as follows:

- At Bayswater-Summerville and Long Reach United Churches, the Minister/Worship Leader and Musician will be seated by the pulpit before congregants are seated. At Westfield United Church, the Minister/Worship Leader and Musician may be seated before congregants are seated, or may enter through the door behind the pulpit.
- No congregational or choir singing is allowed at this time (Fundy St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Region instruction) due to the uncertainty of singing as a method of transmitting the virus. A soloist may sing, provided that they can be 15 feet away from any other person. If the research on singing changes, this restriction may be revisited.
- There will be one Reader each week for the Scripture and Minute for Mission, who will read from their pew. At Westfield United Church, a cordless microphone will be available for the reader to pick up when they arrive at the church, and they will return it to its location after the service. This microphone will be sanitized after the service. The reader will be asked to bring their own bible to read from, or a print-out of the reading(s) will be provided.
- Bibles and hymn books will be removed from the pews, due to the difficulty of cleaning them after each service.
- Pews, door handles, light switches, railings, and other high-touch surfaces will be cleaned and the cleaning will be recorded in a log book by a roster of volunteers after each service.
- The offering will be counted in the usual way. If possible, the envelopes will be locked up for 72 hours before being handled. The counters will wash their hands before and after handing the envelopes, and will be encouraged to avoid touching their faces while doing so.

Baptisms:

- Infant baptism: The parents/guardians of the child should be the only ones to hold the baby. The Minister will sanitize their hands before each baptism (and possibly don a mask).
- Multiple Baptisms in a single service: Water should come from individual cups or a bottle for each person, not the common font.
- The Minister and Elder will be the only people to lay hands on the person being baptized (as well as the parents/guardians if it is a child being baptized).

Communion

- Worshippers will be invited to bring elements (bread, juice) with them to worship when it is a communion service. Prepared “communion packs” containing a cube of bread and a condiment cup of grape juice will be available at the door for worshippers who choose to use these elements. Communion will be consumed sitting in the pews, with no need for worshippers or communion servers to move through the congregation.
- These communion packs will be prepared ahead of the service by a person wearing a mask, who thoroughly washes their hands before preparing them.
- Worshippers are asked to take the empty containers home with them, or place them in a waste basket that will be available at the door, rather than leaving them in the pews.

Weddings/Funerals

- The same processes for the congregants will be in place for weddings and funerals as they are for Regular Worship Services.
- At weddings, the Minister will ensure that they maintain a physical distance from the couple at all times, except when offering the blessing. The Minister will use hand sanitizer (and possibly don a mask) before offering the blessing.
- Weddings and Funerals will both be “by invitation only,” and a seating plan will be worked out between the family and the Minister to ensure physical distancing between household bubbles. This seating plan will be provided to the Greeters (who would normally be Elders on Session).

Operational Plan – Building (Westfield United Church)

- Outside doors will be locked at all times and Hand Sanitizer will be accessible by each entrance.
- Staff (Minister, Office Administrator) will be asked to self-screen each day that they are working from the church building, and sign a log book indicating that they have no symptoms.
- Visitors will be screened for symptoms by whoever admits them, and may be asked to wear a mask at the discretion of the person admitting them.
- Office visits (Minister’s Office or Office Administrator’s Office) are only possible when sitting on opposite ends of the room to maintain physical distancing. The Parlour is also available for visits when more space is required.
- The Stewards (or their delegates) may work on projects at their discretion
- Building cleaning – high-touch surfaces will be cleaned by a roster of volunteers after each use of the building. Cleaning supplies and a log book will be made available through the Pastoral Charge office.

- COVID 19 and Handwashing signs will be placed on entrance doors, in each washroom, and all bulletin boards
- Meetings of church groups (e.g. Official Board; Session, UCW, Stewards) may be held in the Parlour, the Sanctuary, or St. Giles Hall, providing that physical distancing between individual people or bubbles can be maintained. Food may not be served/shared at this time. Names and phone numbers will be recorded in case they are required for contact tracing – these lists will be stored in a secure location and shredded after 21 days.
- Outside groups (e.g. TOPS, Art Group, Girl Guides, Scouting) must provide a written safety plan to the Official Board before resuming their use of the space.

Operation Plan – Building (Long Reach)

- Hand Sanitizer will be available by the entrance
- The Trustees (or their delegates) may work on projects at their discretion
- Building cleaning – high-touch surfaces will be cleaned by a roster of volunteers after each use of the building. Cleaning supplies and a log book will be made available through the Pastoral Charge office.
- COVID 19 and Handwashing signs will be placed on entrance door, washroom, and bulletin boards
- Meetings of church groups (e.g. Official Board; Session, Trustees) may be held in the Sanctuary or River Room, providing that physical distancing between individual people or bubbles can be maintained. Food may not be served/shared at this time. Names and phone numbers will be recorded in case they are required for contact tracing – these lists will be stored in a secure location and shredded after 21 days.

Operation Plan – Building (Summerville United Church)

- Hand Sanitizer will be available by the entrance.
- The Trustees (or their delegates) may work on projects at their discretion
- Building cleaning – high-touch surfaces will be cleaned by a roster of volunteers after each use of the building. Cleaning supplies and a log book will be made available through the Pastoral Charge office.
- COVID 19 and Handwashing signs will be placed on entrance doors, washroom, and bulletin boards
- Meetings of church groups (e.g. Official Board; Session, Trustees) may be held in the Sanctuary or Hall, providing that physical distancing between individual people or bubbles can be maintained. Food may not be served/shared at this time. Names and phone numbers will be recorded in case they are required for contact tracing – these lists will be stored in a secure location and shredded after 21 days.

Next Steps to Opening our Buildings (once this plan is approved)

1. Communicating with the Outside groups who use the space – Rev. Kate (Aug. 6 – pending)
2. Consultation with Youth and Young Families Ministry Coordinator regarding safe resumption of programming for youth and children – Rev. Kate and Gaby Anderson (Aug. 6 – ongoing)

3. Sourcing Hand Sanitizer (and possibly dispensers) for all three church buildings – Elaine (Aug. 6 – completed)
4. Sourcing condiment containers and small Ziplock bags for communion – Elaine (Aug. 6 – completed)
5. Recruiting and Training Greeters – Rev. Kate and Session (Aug. 6 – ongoing)
6. Communicating with Cleaners of all three church buildings re. expectations and how to log cleaning – Rev. Kate, Stewards (Westfield), Trustees (LR and BW-SV) (Aug. 6 – pending)
7. Creating a secure Attendance File system to keep track of all building users for 21 days before shredding – Elaine (Aug. 6 – completed)
8. Creating a Staff Self-Screening Log Book – Rev. Kate and Elaine (Aug. 6 – completed)

Appendix 1

Public Health says symptoms shown by people with COVID-19 have included:

- a fever above 38 C or signs of a fever (e.g. chills)
- a new cough or worsening chronic cough
- sore throat
- runny nose
- headache
- new onset of fatigue
- new onset of muscle pain
- diarrhoea
- loss of sense of taste or smell
- difficulty breathing
- in children, purple markings on the fingers and toes.

People with two of those symptoms should stay at home and call 811. People with one of these symptoms are strongly encouraged not to attend worship, and self-monitor.