

Re-opening of Kincardine United Church for In-Person Worship

Recommendations Prepared by the Council-designated Working Group

The province of Ontario no longer has any public health mandates for public worship spaces as of April 1st, 2022. While there are still public health *guidelines*, Kincardine United Church is going more slowly and carefully to protect the most vulnerable among us. Kincardine United Church Council authorized a working group to develop recommendations for re-opening our church which were specific to our Community of Faith. This Working Group consists of Rod Coates, Gord Dunbar, Mary Phillips, Ralph Knowles, Judy Zarubick, with Liz Dillman as resource to the group. This group continues to use information from the Province of Ontario, Grey-Bruce Public Health, as well as the Western Ontario Waterways Regional Council, to update its recommendations.

The following recommendations follow a phased-in approach that cautiously protects our volunteers and congregation as well as our staff and our minister – with special thought always going to those most vulnerable. These recommendations also apply to group events and external groups using the building. With the continuous evolution of COVID-19 variants in our community, province and around the world, these recommendations and protocols will also need to change, be re-visited, and amended.

Given its demographic reality, the health and safety of our congregation is of utmost importance. We open our doors to in-person worship while ensuring we take the time to do so safely and carefully. We know some of you are already enjoying in person worship while others feel safer staying at home. It is our desire that these recommendations will provide a prudent path forward. It will take the work of all to follow these requirements and recommendations, making in-person gathering as safe as possible in the church facility. Thank you to each of you for continuing to do your part to keep each and all of us safe!

Please be safe and God Bless,

Your Re-opening Working Group

Please feel free to direct further questions, concerns, clarifications to Council President Rod Coates 519-396-7275 or notablecoates2gmail.com

Recommendations approved by the Kincardine United Church Council continue to be subject to ongoing conversations with the minister, staff and congregation

The mandate: Church buildings and activities will be phased in over the coming weeks with priority to respect for the most vulnerable among us. Worship services will be projected on all sanctuary monitors, live streaming will continue, and recordings will be uploaded to our YouTube channel and our Facebook page.

Effective March 31st, 2022, capacity limits and physical distancing end, but masking will continue. Those in the building may take masks off only when consuming beverages or food while seated.

Effective Easter Monday, April 18th, 2022, the mask requirement will be ended. We ask each person to respect the personal space other individuals create for their own safety. We would remind folks to stay home if they are feeling unwell. We also recommend the use of **free** rapid test kits available at local pharmacies and grocery stores.

The Building:

- Hand sanitizer at all entrance doors and in all washrooms
- Masks available at all entrance doors
- Signage posted at all entrance doors about masks required until Monday, April 18th, 2022.
- Families are encouraged to bring their own pew supplies for children.
- No nursery services will be offered until suitable volunteers are available.
- Coffee and refreshments will not be provided until suitable volunteers are available.
- Open windows when able.

Face Coverings:

Until April 18th, 2022, Kincardine United Church will require that those who can wear a face covering will do so to protect their fellow attendees. Note that there are individuals who cannot wear masks for health reasons, who require lip reading to communicate, or experience facial irritations wearing a mask. Individuals who are not capable of wearing a mask should not feel stigmatized or guilty for not doing so. However, those unable to wear a mask prior to April 18th, 2022, will be provided with additional assistance to enable their participation from home.

Seating:

If someone indicates they need physical distance to feel safe, please respect their wishes as each of us adjusts to the evolving reality of this virus.

Greeters:

- Until April 18th, 2022, masked greeters will:
 - ensure hand sanitizer is used upon entry & exit and provide a mask if the attendee requires one.
 - Will provide elevator assistance. The Lift Operator will have antiseptic wipes to clean touch points as required.

Worship:

- Singing hymns is permitted if masks are worn.
- Sharing the Peace will be done without touching by remaining in place and observing physical distancing.
- Communion will take place using updated Programme Committee protocols.
- Sunday School and Nursery will not be resuming until suitable volunteers are available.

Offering:

- Per past practice, offering plates will not be passed during the service. A plate will be placed at the back of the worship space and below the balcony stairs for those wishing to place their offering.
- Protocols for counting the offering have been developed.

Facility Usage Other Than Worship:

- Church group usage of the facility will now be booked by the Booking Facilitators and follow all requirements of Kincardine United Church if they exceed Grey-Bruce Public Health protocols.
- Non-church group usage of facility will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Booking Facilitators and follow all requirements of Kincardine United Church if they exceed Grey-Bruce Public Health protocols.
- Any external group booking the facility will need to provide their protocols for using the facility before being considered.

Sanitization:

- Frequent cleaning and disinfection of all areas of the facility, especially high touch surfaces.

Church Office

- The church office has returned to regular office hours following the above requirements. **Note that masking is required inside the church office unless consuming food or beverages.**

Communication

- An email communication will be sent to the church email distribution list with details of this re-opening plan. If someone recently using the building has been infected with COVID-19, notification by email communication will be sent to the church email distribution list.
- The church website will have updates posted on what to expect for worship. Updates will also be posted in the weekly announcements.
- Current requirements for safety will be posted at all entrances.

Further Considerations

- Groups previously using the facility or currently using the facility will be contacted to inform them of this revised re-opening plan.
- Any weddings or funerals occurring at Kincardine United Church will strictly adhere to all requirements of Kincardine United Church if they exceed the Grey Bruce Public Health protocols as well as those of the funeral home.