

# **Centretown United Church**

## **Policy for Opening the Building for Worship Services**

### **1. Preface.**

On March 11th, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the global outbreak of COVID 19 a pandemic. On March 15th, 2020 Centretown United Church Council met and made the decision to cancel all Church services and Church-sponsored functions effective immediately. Everyone in the congregation was telephoned and advised of that decision. Follow up e-mails were sent, signage indicating that we were not holding worship services was put in our exterior notice boards, our facebook page and web-site was updated with this information as well. On March 17th, 2020, the Ontario Government declared a state of emergency, and ordered the closure of all indoor programs and services, including those of communities of faith. On June 11th, 2020 Centretown Church Council met via Zoom and decided to follow the strongly stated recommendation from the Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council (EOORC) that no churches reopen for public worship before Labour Day week-end. Also, every Community of Faith prepare guidelines for reopening and submit their plan to the Regional Council two weeks prior to their proposed opening date; and every Community of Faith create a separate plan with guidelines for reopening their building to rentals and community activities or community groups.

### **2 During the Closure**

Because Centre 507 and the Centretown Emergency Food Centre provide a necessary service to those in our community, both Centres were deemed essential services and remained open during the mandatory closure of church buildings. This was approved by the Ontario Government and by our Insurance Company (Ecclesiastical) on April 13th, 2020. As the Centres could not serve their clients in their own space and follow health safety guidelines, they both used and continue to use our Inner Room. The Food Centre is serving clients on Monday and Friday, and Centre 507 is serving clients on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday. Presently clients enter the Inner Room through an exterior door from Bank Street, walk through the Inner Room receiving either groceries or lunch (depending on the day) and exit through the exterior door into the parking lot. Both these doors are handicap accessible and markers were put on the ground for proper social distancing. Only one client is allowed to enter the Inner Room at a time, and they have to wear a mask to be served. All staff and volunteers wear proper PPE attire.

While our building was closed, the work of our church continued. A worship service with announcements was sent out to over 65 people weekly. The Pastoral Care Team with the help of many others in the congregation kept in touch with our members and adherents, offering support and the delivery of groceries and medications if needed. Some of our committees continued to meet over zoom, the Administrator remotely monitored our telephone and e-mails, and saw to the daily needs of the church.

People in the congregation were encouraged to continue their financial givings through PAR, e-transfer, Canada Helps or by putting a cheque in the mail.

### 3 Purpose

This plan was prepared with the intention of reopening Centretown United Church for faith-based activities while preventing the transmission of COVID 19 among members and adherents of the congregation, staff, contractors, volunteers and the public.

This plan does not contain guidelines for tenants, renters and community groups that use our building. A separate policy will be written for re-opening the building to these groups.

The Church Council is responsible for executing a duty of care for all those who use our building. The Church Council and its Committees are responsible for the oversight of this plan. The COVID-19 sub-committee, reporting to Church Council, is responsible for the monitoring, implementation, evaluation and updating of this plan.

### 4 The Plan for Re-Opening

Centretown United Church understands that the potential for spread of infection during gatherings is high. Many of the risks can be mitigated by maintaining physical distancing, wearing masks, cleaning and disinfection frequently, registering attendees, protecting attendees, the public, staff, contractors and volunteers, and limiting high-risk activities.

The staff will follow self-screening procedures and follow the protocol that has been put in place for all congregants who will be attending worship.

See appendix #1

	Action
Building Policy	Individuals with symptoms of COVID 19, individuals who have travelled internationally in the last 14 days, and individuals who have had close contact with confirmed COVID 19 cases in the last 14 days are not allowed entry into the building. Posters will be displayed at all church entrances with this information.
	Everyone in the building must wear a mask as required by City of Ottawa bylaw #2020-186.
	Individuals must use hand sanitizer when entering the building. Hand sanitizer stations will be available at all entry and exit points of the building.
	Individuals must register upon entry, their name and contact information given. Records will be secured in the church office and will be kept for a maximum period of three months. Any personal information collected can only be used for the purpose of COVID 19 tracing.
Entering the Sanctuary	Entry into the building (for worship) will be restricted to the Bank Street Sanctuary doors. Only people with mobility issues can access the Sanctuary through the parking lot/ramp entrance. All doors will be propped open so no physical contact will be made. The doors will be opened 20 minutes before the service is to begin and be closed 10 minutes after the service has begun. This will allow gradual entry and prevent crowding.

	Individuals must sanitize their hands; hand sanitizer stations will be located at entrances to the Sanctuary.
	Individuals must wear a mask; masks will be available to those who do not have one.
	Individuals and or social circles must keep a 6' physical distance from the person in front of, and around them at all times.
	Upon entering, there will be a desk set up where a Greeter will screen the individual for symptoms of COVID 19, asking if the individual has travelled internationally in the last 14 days, and if they have had close contact with confirmed COVID 19 cases in the last 14 days. If they answer yes to any of these questions they will not be allowed entry. See appendix #1
	The Greeter will take down the individual's name and contact information. This attendance sheet must also include volunteers and staff who are in attendance. See appendix #2
	At the Bank Street Sanctuary door there will be 1 Greeter and 2 Ushers, and at the parking lot/ramp door there will be 1 Greeter and 1 Usher. The custodian will continue to be present on Sunday mornings to assist as needed.
Seating in the Sanctuary	Once the individual is registered an Usher will take them to a designated pew.
	Our Sanctuary has a capacity of 700. The Ontario Guidance for Places of Worship allows 30% of our capacity as long as people sit 6' from one another. Following these guidelines we can seat 72 downstairs and 74 in the balcony, if need be.
	Physical distancing is ensured by taping off 6' around the sound system, pulpit, piano and organ. Only those individuals running the sound system will have access to the middle aisle by the sound system controls. Pews will be taped off to ensure a 6' space between worshippers. Signage will indicate where worshippers can sit and they will be seated by an Usher.
	Worshippers entering from the Bank Street Sanctuary doors will be seated by an Usher from the back to the front on the east side of the Sanctuary and from the front to the back on the west side of the Sanctuary. Worshippers entering from the parking lot/ramp entrance will be guided by an Usher into the Sanctuary through the handicap entrance door and will be seated in the handicap pew on the far west side of the Sanctuary. The Minister and Music Director will enter the Sanctuary through the Vestry.
In-Sanctuary Worship	Shaking hands, hugging, touching or passing items between people compromises the 6' distance ruling and should not occur. There will be no service bulletins; the Minister will lead the congregation through the order of service. Announcements and the service will continue to be emailed out to the congregation.
	Children will remain seated in the Sanctuary with their parent(s), as they will not be leaving to attend Sunday School.
	There will be no passing of offering plates. Offering plates will be positioned at

	entry/exist doors within the Sanctuary. The offering will be secured in the office safe and left at least 72 hours. Counting will continue to be done by a limited number of individuals when the office is otherwise unoccupied.
	Two microphones will be required; one at the pulpit (Minister) and one at the lectern (scripture reader).
	Both the piano and organ will be used during the worship service, but there will be no congregational or choir singing as this can transmit the virus over a greater distance than 6'. Soloists or duets are a possibility if socially distanced.
	At this time the hymn books and Bibles will be removed from the pews.
	At this time there will be no Communion Services or Baptisms.
Exiting Sanctuary	To avoid a bottle neck and to ensure social distancing, individuals are asked to stay in their pews until an Usher invites them to leave. Those sitting on the east side of the Sanctuary will leave first, then those sitting on the west side long aisle, then those sitting on the west side short aisle. Worshippers will leave using the Argyle Street doors, which will be propped open.
	An Usher will assist any person with mobility issues out through the parking lot ramp exit.
Facilities	While in person gatherings are permitted, in-person social gatherings such as Fellowship Time will be avoided at this time. Food and beverages will not be served in our building until further notice.
	People will be asked to use only the washroom on the main floor outside the church office. Our Sunday Custodian will ensure that it is sanitized after each use.
	The Sanctuary will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized by our custodian before it is in use again.
Other Faith Based Groups	Council, Committees, UCW, Bible Study and other church related groups are not presently meeting in our building. Each group will be given guidelines on how they can meet while adhering to COVID 19 restrictions. See appendix #3

## 5 Moving Forward

Council will send out a letter to the congregation either by e-mail or mail, giving them information about how worship will be when they return and the date when in-person worship in the Sanctuary will begin. A questionnaire will accompany the letter asking if they feel comfortable returning and if they plan on returning. Information will be updated on our web site and facebook page.

Continue to send out a weekly reflection with announcements to those not returning to in-service Worship.

Assign people to take on the responsibility of being Greeters and Ushers.

The COVID 19 sub-committee will keep abreast of the COVID 19 situation, review and discuss amendments to this plan and make necessary updates to it, as modifications are made to government policy and directives.

If the situation occurs that a COVID 19 exposure has happened within the worshipping congregation, the responsibility of calling all attendees on the contact list is Public Health.

This policy, for the use of the Sanctuary of Centretown United Church for Worship Services, will be in compliance with the guidelines that are set by the Ontario Government.

## **6 Approval**

This plan for Reopening Centretown United Church for Worship Services was approved by Centretown United Church Council on Monday, August 31, 2020.

This plan for Reopening Centretown United Church for Worship Services was approved by the Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council on September 1, 2020.