

The Anglican Parish of St. Francis

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August 30, 2021

Dear friends in Christ,

It is with great joy that I write to inform you that our plans to reopen are clearly underway. It is hard to believe that almost two years have passed since we have all been together as a family in one place – our beloved St. Francis Church – worshipping God and participating in all the social activities that satisfy our longing for love and friendship. And yes, receiving the blessed Eucharist! As most of you know, from the very beginning of our lockdown and building closure, a *Pandemic Response Team* was set up to monitor the COVID situation, and ultimately make plans for our eventual reopening.

We promised that we would not proceed with our plan until we were confident that it would be safe to do so. We were determined that we would not compromise the health and safety of our people by acting too quickly. You are all too precious for that. Yes, it was hard, because we fully understand how much our community of faith means to us. If the pews could only speak, imagine the stories they would tell; stories of lives touched, relationships healed, hopes restored and friendships renewed. I would suggest and affirm that St. Francis Church, our building, is sacred space, holy ground; that place on earth where the veil between heaven and earth is pulled aside.

And so, here is our plan. Mark Sunday, September 12th, 11 a.m. on your calendar as our official day of reopening! See reverse side for more information.

In the meantime, much work still needs to be accomplished. Between now and September 12th, you will be updated as needed. Protocols pertaining to such things as social distancing, the reception of Holy Communion, fellowship time and many more will be made available. As we go forward, continued instruction and guidelines will be given. As you probably realize, we are not alone in this. Religious communities of all faiths need to adapt their worship practices as well. It is a journey we are all taking. For me, it begs the question – what is truly essential to our faith and what does it mean? To quote Jesus, “to worship God in Spirit and in Truth!” But....I digress.

I want to close by thanking all of you for your ongoing patience and understanding throughout these many months of uncertainty. A special thank you to our Pandemic Response Team for your commitment and for helping us wrestle with the difficult questions. Thank you to those who have participated in our weekly tapings which, as you know, made it possible for us to stay connected in a “virtual” sort of way. Thank you all, for just being you and for all the courage and strength you have demonstrated since the onset of COVID.

Finally, let me say (not to put a damper on anything), all the above depends on many things. We all know that our war with COVID continues. Things can change at a moment’s notice – negatively or positively. We will continue to ensure your safety and make plans accordingly.

This letter comes with my warmest personal wishes.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Wayne McIntosh

Reopening Plan for the St. Francis Anglican Church Building for September 12, 2021 – 11:00 a.m. service

Responsibilities of the gathering participants:

- People with pre-existing health conditions are urged to take necessary precautions to reduce the risk of infection while attending parish gatherings.
- We **strongly recommend and encourage all people to get vaccinated**, but that will not be mandated for attendance.
- People should not attend parish gatherings if:
 - They are feeling unwell, have a cough or sniffles, or fever/chill.
 - They have been in contact with anyone feeling unwell or diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
- Upon entering the building, people will be required to:
 - Wear a mask at all times while in the building, except when receiving communion. People will be required to bring their own mask.
 - “Sign-in” for the purpose of gathering names and phone numbers for contact tracing in the event a case of COVID-19 is detected following a gathering.
 - Use hand sanitizer.
- Once inside the building/sanctuary, people shall:
 - Observe physical distancing (2 metres) at all times, including while walking up the ramp.
 - Keep all their belongings with them in their pew, including coats, hats, footwear etc. Coat racks in the basement are not to be used.
 - Refrain from moving about, hugging, shaking hands, etc., at all times. The peace will be shared from one’s own pew, perhaps with a “Namaste” or “bow” greeting.
 - Only access the lower hall for the use of the washrooms.
- Upon leaving the sanctuary/building, people will:
 - Leave the church as they entered, physically distancing.
 - The participants will depart “gradually” so as not to become congested at the back of the church.

Responsibilities of the Parish:

- We are currently limited to the number of people we can have in the sanctuary at one time. We do not anticipate that being an issue at the start, but if/when it does, we will determine how to monitor this.
- We will ensure the availability of hand sanitizer throughout the church building. Hand sanitizer will be required upon entry into the building.
- Eucharist:
 - The reception of communion will follow the diocesan guidelines - communion will be received in one kind – the bread (wafers). There will be no wine distributed to the congregation.
 - The Celebrant(s) will wear a mask during the preparation and administration of the bread.
 - The bread will have no direct human contact, other than that of the recipient of the sacrament.
 - People will proceed to the altar by the middle aisle and return to their seats by the side aisles. A sides person will direct and only permit two or three people to “wait in line”, two metres apart, while approaching the altar.
- Congregational singing will not take place.
- There will be no “passing of the plate” for offerings. There will be an offering plate available as you enter the sanctuary for offerings to be put in.
- There will be no fellowship gatherings before or after the service.
- For parishioners who are unable to return, as well as others, we will still be providing a recorded version of our Sunday morning service via YouTube. This should appear on YouTube by the following day (Monday). By attending the service in person, those attendees agree to be recorded and posted on the internet.

We will continue to review the Diocesan and Provincial Protocols and as they change the necessary adjustments accordingly.