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December 18, 2020

Dear faith leaders,

The holiday season is a busy time for many faith communities, with holiday events and activities, as well as increased participation among congregations. I am writing to remind you to continue your efforts to prevent COVID-19 at your place of worship during this holiday season. Please follow public health guidelines and lead by example within your faith community. It is also an excellent time to review public health guidelines with your congregation and your staff in order to keep them safe.

Resources for you and your faith community are included at the end of this message.

Review public health guidelines with your faith community

We recommend using multiple methods for effective communications. Messaging should include verbal reminders, signage, pre-recorded messages, and/or information in community newsletters. Please remind your faith community about:

- [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and the importance of screening for COVID-19;
- When indoors, wearing a mask that covers your nose, mouth, and chin at all times;
- Keeping a physical distance of 2 meters from people you don't live with;
- Frequent hand-washing;
- Sneeze or cough into your elbow or a tissue;
- Avoiding touching your face.

Screen for COVID-19 at in-person worship and events

All members of the faith community, including children, should be screened upon arrival each day they attend services. At all entrances, display the poster "[Screening for COVID-19.](#)" Refuse entry to anyone who meets the criteria on the poster, and encourage them to stay home and call the Timiskaming Health Unit to find out if they need a test.

Take precautions to keep your faith community safe

The following precautions will help protect your faith community and our district. You can find more details [here](#). Please contact us at 705-647-4305, ext. 7 if you have questions about the public health measures you should take at your place of worship.

- When possible, offer virtual opportunities to worship and participate in faith community events.
Encourage participation in virtual worship, particularly among vulnerable individuals and people returning from out of district, for example, travellers and students.

- Maintain a 2-metre separation between people from different households. Consider creating markings on the floor or on seats, and manage the flow of people to prevent crowding.
- Place an alcohol-based hand sanitizer at entrances and exits. Encourage everyone to wash their hand when entering and exiting.
- Adapt or suspend activities that increase the risk of spreading COVID-19, including singing, choirs and playing wind or brass instruments; social gatherings before or after in-person services, especially those where masks must be removed to eat or drink; sharing materials such as books, communion, microphones, or prayer mats; or childcare and children's programming. For more information, click [here](#).
- Protect vulnerable individuals, especially people who are aged 70 and over or who are immunocompromised. You could offer virtual, drive-thru, or smaller services for these individuals.
- Following every service, clean and disinfect frequently-touched surfaces.
- Remember to continue follow public health guidance during your faith community's meetings and events. In particular, multiple households gathering together for a meal is discouraged.

Resources

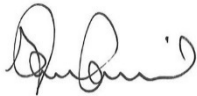
[Poster: Mask Required](#)

[Poster: Be COVID-Smart \(public health measures\)](#)

[Poster: Screening for COVID-19](#)

[Public Health Ontario's Environmental Cleaning fact sheet](#)

Sincerely,



Dr. Glenn Gorneil
Acting Medical Officer of Health/CEO