

# **Guidelines for the Reopening of the 19 Wing Chapel**

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (Roman Catholic)  
St. Michael and All Angels (Protestant)

BC has made significant progress in the fight against COVID-19 and on 06 May 2020, Premier John Horgan outlined BC's Restart Plan for slowly and carefully easing restrictions. On May 13, Dr. Bonnie Henry, the Provincial Health Officer for BC, announced that faith communities could begin to gather for worship in the near future. In doing so, she emphasized the need for strict adherence to current and future health orders. This document is intended to provide direction and guidance for the reopening of the 19 Wing Chapel in a manner that protects the health and safety of both our chapel and wider communities.

To that end, as faith communities, we must continue to exercise caution as we prepare to reopen, in a limited way, for public worship together. Though some restrictions have been relaxed, we need to continue to stay vigilant with infection prevention, modelling and monitoring, and mandating strict protocols regarding cleaning and sanitization. This also requires us to work together in cooperation with the Wing Occupational Health and Safety Committee, PMED, and the WGSO. Finally, these guidelines will become part of the Wing Chaplains contribution to the 19 Wing Business Resumption Plan.

## **I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

1. The opening of chapel at 19 Wing Comox "will be at the discretion of the WComd" IAW the regulations of the particular province in which the chapel is located. (Ref. Chaplain General Update # 8, 20 May 2020).
2. The resumption of public worship at 19 Wing will take place IAW all the health directives promulgated by the BC Health Authority as well as all designated CAF authorities. Staying informed, being prepared and following public health advice is essential in a constantly changing situation and our chapel communities will remain responsive. Good hygiene practices, proper sanitization of public spaces, physical distancing practices and education will remain our guiding principles as we reopen. The maximum number of 50 currently permitted to gather by the Provincial Health Officer will include all chaplains/clergy, liturgical ministers, musicians and anyone else present during Sunday or weekday worship.
3. Social gatherings before or after Mass/Service (including coffee and donuts, potlucks) will not take place during this initial phase of reopening. More personal settings such as chaplain offices or meetings remain restricted to gatherings of 2-6 people.
4. For Roman Catholic Members: All faithful within the jurisdiction of the RC Military Ordinariate of Canada remain dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass during this initial reopening phase.
5. The health and safety of everyone is first and foremost. To be successful we will need to continue to do what we are already doing, namely: to follow public health measures, practice

physical distancing and good hygiene and to continue to act responsibly. All those attending worship services do so at their own risk. It is important for individuals and families to take responsibility for protecting themselves - and others. Prior to attending Mass/Services, the faithful should use a self-assessment tool to determine whether it is safe or not to attend.

However:

- a. The following people *must stay home* for the sake of others in the community:
    - (1) Those with COVID-19, or those who live with someone with COVID-19;
    - (2) Those who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19;
    - (3) Anyone feeling sick with a cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat, even if symptoms appear to be mild or resemble a cold;
    - (4) Anyone at high risk from COVID-19, for example, those with chronic medical conditions, especially with upper respiratory or flu-like symptoms, and;
    - (5) Those who have recently travelled outside of Canada.
  
  - b. The following individuals *are encouraged to stay home* for the sake of the wider community:
    - (1) Those who live with someone with upper respiratory or flu-like symptoms;
    - (2) People, especially the elderly (over 65 years of age) with underlying or pre-existing medical conditions; and
    - (3) Family members who live with elderly people or those at risk.
6. Chaplains with a respiratory infection of any kind or exhibiting symptoms associated with COVID-19 must refrain from presiding at public worship or administering the sacraments. The same holds for other ministers who might serve at Mass/Service (deacon, pastoral assistant, servers, lectors, choir, etc).

## **II. PREPARING COMMUNITY MEMBERS FOR REOPENING**

7. Communication: Faith Community Coordinators (FCC) and others concerned must communicate clearly and effectively with their chapel community members their plans for when and how they will resume public Masse/Service. Specifically, the communication must cover the following three areas:

- a. How the chapel community will determine the 50-person maximum to attend a given Mass/Service;
  - b. How the chapel community will ensure physical distancing; and
  - c. The measures the chapel community will take to ensure proper cleaning and sanitizing.
8. Determining the 50-Person Maximum:
- a. Chapel community members will sign up to attend a specific Mass/Service at a specific time on a regular basis. This will allow for designated and guaranteed seating. Aside from people with special needs, preferential treatment should be avoided;
  - b. A sign-up system is the simplest and recommended method for chapels to solicit the names of community members who wish to attend a scheduled Mass/Service. Multiple and easily accessible ways of sign-up should be employed. For example, through a combination of methods including online sign-ups, written sign-ups, email, and phone calls (exclusively online or email sign-up systems should be avoided since restriction to these methods might exclude many who otherwise would wish to attend);
  - c. Signs should be placed on the chapel doors to indicate the Mass/Service schedule, provide a telephone number, and email address for people wanting to attend Mass/Service; and
  - d. A list of attendees and their contact information must be retained should someone test positive for COVID-19, thereby assisting public health officials with contact tracing and follow-up. The list will be kept until advised otherwise.
9. Ushers/Greeters:
- a. Many of a chapel's most committed volunteers are particularly susceptible to the COVID-19 virus because of their age and other pre-existing health conditions. We have a "duty of care" to protect them from all undue harm;
  - b. The responsibilities of ushers and greeters will increase considerably during this time of increased restriction. These volunteers are the first point of contact for arriving chapel community members;
  - c. They need to be masked and able to interact with the faithful while still maintaining physical distancing;

- d. They should have a copy of a “nominal roll” or sign-in sheet to confirm that those who arrive for a scheduled Mass/Service have previously signed up and that their contact information is available; and
- e. They remind the community members as they enter and exit the building of the requirement for physical distancing of 2 metres. They should offer hand-sanitizer (spraying or squirting the disinfectant into people’s hands) upon arrival and prior to lining up for Holy Communion. They are also responsible for pointing out available pews and in directing and restricting traffic flow. Ushers will also dismiss those present by rows upon completion of the Mass/Service.

10. Physical Distancing:

- a. Except for members of the same household, physical distancing of at least 2 metres is to be observed everywhere on the chapel property (in the chapel, front steps, in the parking lot, etc.); and
- b. People are not to gather in the entranceway or near the doors of the chapel before or after Sunday Worship. If the chaplain wishes to greet chapel community members after Mass/Service, physical distancing must be maintained and wearing a face mask should be considered.
- c. Infants and children should remain with their parents at all times.

11. Use of Masks:

- a. Use of face masks/coverings by chapel members at Mass/Service and around the chapel is to be encouraged especially if the 2m physical distancing requirement cannot be met;
- b. Consider having masks available for chapel community members to be able to offer one to those who would like one; and
- c. Chaplains should consider the wearing a face mask for the distribution of Holy Communion.

### **III. PREPARING THE CHAPEL BUILDING FOR REOPENING**

12. Signage:

- a. Signs will be placed on chapel doors to indicate the Mass/Service schedule and provide a telephone number and email address for people wanting to attend Mass/Service following the method determined by the FCC; and

- b. Health and safety guidelines should be posted on the chapels doors and, if appropriate, elsewhere inside the chapel building. Pews designated for seating will be clearly marked and 2m distance indicators will be place on the floor of the central aisle to direct spacing for the reception of Holy Communion when offered.
13. Entrance and Exits:
- a. Entrance and exit doors should be propped open, where possible, as people enter/exit so that congregants need not touch the door handles or doors;
  - b. Entrance to the chapel will be restricted to the main entrance at the front of the chapel with an exception for those requiring use of the handicapped entrance and ramp to the side of the chapel building. Ushers stationed at the main chapel entrance will monitor those who enter, reminding them of the requirement for physical distancing of 2 metres and the need for hand sanitization. Members of a single household may enter and exit together, since they do not need to practice physical distancing with each other; and
  - c. Once the maximum of 50 persons in the chapel is reached, entry to the chapel will be restricted. People who simply show up for Mass/Service at the door must be turned away in a polite and respectful manner. Chapel community members should also be advised to contact the Chaplain's Office or the FCC, in order to make the necessary arrangements to be included at a future Mass/Service. Due to limited capacity and issues concerning jurisdiction, attendance may have to be restricted to members of the Defence Team and their families and to habitual parishioners of our chapel communities. Participation of the faithful from local civilian churches is to be discouraged at Sunday celebrations.
14. Seating in the pews: To maintain physical distancing, seating is restricted to every second pew and in a zig-zag manner. Pews that can be used for seating will be clearly marked. Unused rows may be conveniently closed off with painter's tape, which will not damage the pews. Disinfection of used pews must be done following each Mass/Service.
15. Use of Restrooms and Crying Room:
- a. Because of the need for sanitizing, it is recommended that there be only one dedicated restroom for use, and:
  - b. The use of the Crying Room will be restricted until further notice.

16. Cleaning and Sanitizing/Disinfecting:

- a. An adequate stock of hand sanitizer and other cleaning supplies, including disposable gloves and aprons for cleaners, should be readily available at the time of reopening;
- b. Chaplains and all leading worship should wash their hands thoroughly before beginning Mass/Service and again prior to distributing Holy Communion if it is offered;
- c. Hand sanitizing should take place near the entrance to the chapel for those entering the building. A bottle of sanitizer, touched by many, should be avoided. Instead, use of an automatic dispenser or having an usher/greeter wearing a mask spraying the hands of those entering the building or prior to lining up to receive Holy Communion is recommended; and
- d. Volunteers or others who are not vulnerable because of age or serious health conditions must clean and sanitize the pews and other commonly touched surfaces such as door handles, as well as restrooms, immediately after every Mass/Service.

17. Materials:

- a. Individual bulletins should not be distributed at Mass/Service, unless they are handed out individually by a glove-wearing usher/greeter, who is masked and remains at arm's length;
- b. All paper and other loose printed items should be removed from the foyer;
- c. Collection plates must not be passed from person to person in the pews. Long-handled collection baskets may be used, if the usher can maintain the required physical distancing. Other "collection points" such as boxes under the supervision of an usher/greeter may be provided for congregants to deposit their offerings. Chapel communities, moreover, are encouraged to make use of automatic debit as a means of making their offering.
- d. Use of pew bibles, hymn books and Sunday missals will be removed from the pews and their use prohibited until further notice. Consideration should be given to using the projector and screen and/or disposable paper bulletins and song sheets in order to avoid contamination. Congregants are also encouraged to bring their own worship aides if they require them or to download them to their mobile device.

18. Other Considerations:

- a. Holy Water and Baptismal fonts remain empty.

- b. In areas where the faithful might stand in line (for example, waiting to receive Holy Communion), coloured tape will be placed on the floor to indicate proper 2 metre spacing between persons and to direct traffic flow in and out of pews.
- c. Communion will be under one species only. Use of a common cup/chalice or intinction is prohibited. The FCC's will determine liturgical guidelines based on direction from their denominational leaders and tradition.
- d. While music is integral to worship, congregational singing should be kept to a minimum. If a choir, cantor or musicians are present physical distancing must be observed. If physical distancing cannot be observed the use of a single cantor or musician is recommended. Musicians will be responsible for cleaning and disinfecting musical instruments following use.
- e. Access to the sacristy will be restricted to chaplains and designated sacristans in order to decrease the possibility of contamination of workspaces and the sacred vessels.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of BC continues to ask each of us to stay safe and to continue acting responsibly to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

The success of our re-opening of the chapel and the resumption of public worship depends to a great extent on how closely we adhere to provincial regulations and directives from our faith community leaders.

Together, our actions can make a difference in the lives of family, friends and strangers alike.

With gratitude for your patience and cooperation, I assure you that your well-being, both spiritual and physical, is of paramount importance as we take these initial steps to resume public participation in our worship services at 19 Wing.

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