

Valleyview Community Church



Health & Safety Protocol Guidelines for Sunday Worship Gatherings (Fall 2020)

Worship in the time of COVID-19

2020 has been full of unique challenges on a global scale. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March we have been forced to suspend indoor Sunday worship gatherings and rethink a ministry pathway which fulfills our three-pronged ministry vision of REACHING UP (Worship), REACHING IN (Discipleship), and REACHING OUT (Mission), while maintaining health and safety for our church family and community.

Your board of directors along with Pastor Jason felt it would be wise to spend the summer months discussing and discerning a course forward, including a safe and efficient Sunday worship gathering plan.

Having shifted to a combination of virtual worship and prayer meetings and outdoor services in recent months, we are planning to re-open the facility for Sunday worship services beginning **Sunday, September 20** offering a similar plan instituted in schools providing both an in-person worship option for those comfortable attending, while offering live streaming of the services for those who are not yet comfortable returning for in-person Sunday worship. (Technical setup for livestreaming is currently in process).

After much discussion, prayer and consultation with public health guidelines for religious gatherings in Ontario, we have put together a re-opening strategy with detailed health and safety protocols, which we are confident will ensure the health and safety of all attendees for Sunday worship, while allowing for the continuation of Spirit-led, meaningful weekly worship services to comfort, encourage and equip us individually and corporately to bear witness to Jesus in our homes, places of work and neighbourhoods.

The following guidelines are subject to change pending potential changes to public health guidelines for religious gatherings. Any such changes will be communicated with the congregation if/when they are instituted.

As always, should you have any questions, concerns or feedback related to anything in this document, you are welcome to contact Rob Gagnon, our Board Chair or Pastor Jason at your convenience.

These are unique times with unique difficulties for the life of the church. That being said, historically the church has often thrived in the midst of difficult seasons in finding unique, Spirit-led opportunities to bear witness to the love of Jesus to those around us. It is our hope and prayer that together we can continue to (re)imagine knowing love that heals hearts, mends families and cares for community during this difficult, yet opportunistic times.

Rob Gagnon, Board Chair

Rev. Jason Tripp, Pastor

I. From the Parking Lot to the Sanctuary: Pre-Service Procedures

In an effort to ensure the health and safety of all who enter the facility we have instituted the following procedures to be adhered to from the parking lot to the sanctuary.

1. Mandatory Face Covering

When entering the facility, we ask that everyone wear a mask or face covering. When seated in the sanctuary maintaining a safe distance from others outside your family, you may remove your face covering, however when standing, singing, or moving about in the facility we ask that face coverings remain on. While everyone will have varying degrees of comfort and desire to wearing a mask, it is imperative that everyone wear a face covering in a collective effort to ensure the health and safety of one another during our time of Sunday worship.

2. Greeting Procedures

Upon entry into the facility, you will be greeted by a greeter who will welcome you with a smile from under their mask, and some hand sanitizer to ensure everyone has clean hands upon entry. You will then be directed to a table in the entranceway where you can review the health screening questions and sign a weekly logbook. In the event we need to do any contact tracing keeping a detailed Sunday attendance list will be helpful. To ensure social distancing, we would ask that you do not linger too long in the foyer but proceed to the sanctuary after entry with all personal belongings.

3. Bathrooms & Hallways

Directional arrows and social distance markers will be clearly marked on the floors directing people to and from the main entrance to the sanctuary to ensure social distancing is in place. Bathroom facilities are open and available, and we ask that usage be limited to one family at a time. The family bathroom beside the sanctuary is also available for those who would like a private bathroom space with their child(ren). Lysol disinfectant will be available in all bathrooms and we kindly ask that hands be washed, and surfaces used to be quickly wiped down before leaving the bathroom.

4. Entering the Sanctuary

In an effort to maintain social distancing, the seating has been rearranged in the sanctuary. Clusters of chairs of varying amounts will be spread out throughout the sanctuary. We ask that upon entering the sanctuary, families find seats together where they are asked to remain for the duration of the worship service.

II. Reaching Up Together: Sunday Worship Procedures

Consistent with the recommendations and restrictions providing by Public Health for Religious Gatherings during this pandemic, we have planned the following components with changes as needed to ensure our Sunday morning worship services will continue to be vibrant and meaningful times of corporate worship, while ensuring the health and safety of all in attendance as we worship together.

1. Service Duration

Due to the restrictions and protocols in place we have decided to trim the length of our Sunday service to approximately 60 min. Weekly Sunday worship services will run from 10:30-11:30am.

2. In-Person / Home Viewing

Recognizing that some will plan to return immediately for in person Sunday worship while others will not feel comfortable returning initially, we will be offering both in-person and at home options to participate in the worship service. We recently purchased a high-quality video camera and are in the process of implementing the necessary technology to offer livestream worship services. All services will be video recorded and made available for those unable to attend the Sunday worship service in person.

3. Church Bulletins

As per public health guidelines, we will not be passing any materials during our Sunday worship services. Every Friday afternoon the bulletin for the upcoming Sunday service will be accessible on the church website www.valleyviewcommunitychurch.ca along with any other resources for adults and children (see below) to engage with.

4. Worship in Song

Music is an integral part of our Sunday worship service and a means of grace. To both respect public health concerns over singing during worship services, while making space for music as a means of grace during worship, we will be bookending the worship services with an abbreviated time of music/singing. While singing, we would ask that all parishioners out their masks on.

5. Offering

We will not be passing an offering plate on Sunday mornings. If you attend the service with an offering envelope, we ask that you drop it in the marked offering box at the back of the sanctuary on your way in or out of the worship service. As always, e-giving is an option by sending your offering at any time to valleyviewfinancial@gmail.com.

We are grateful for your faithfulness and generosity during this time which has been financially challenging for the church.

6. *Generation Glow (Children's Ministry)*

After prayer and consultation with our children's ministry team, we have decided not to offer nursery and children's church at this time. In an effort to keep the kids meaningfully engaged during Sunday worship, we are implementing the following:

a) Grow, Glow & Go Time

Each Sunday, Sara (or another Generation Glow ministry leader) will take a few minutes in the service to share something (story, song, etc.) with the children to encourage, team and connect with them.

b) Online Resources

In preparation for each Sunday worship service, online resources (videos, colouring pages, etc.) will be uploaded to the church website. These resources will be accessible by mid-day Friday every week and can be downloaded, printed & used by the children during the Sunday services or during the week.

c) Weekly Hangouts

Each week there will be an opportunity during the week for Generation Glow Kids and Generation Glow youth to hangout together during a mid-week virtual check-in providing our Generation Glow kids and youth an opportunity to connect with one another and their teachers.

7. *Ministry of the Word & Response*

Pastor Jason will continue to preach most Sundays. The messages will be intentionally shortened with time allowed for discussion and prayer together for the edification of everyone present.

8. *Communion*

Gathering at The Lord's Table is another powerful means of grace and an opportunity to reflect upon and commune with God as we reflect upon the depth of both the sin and brokenness in the world and the radically forgiving love of God displayed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. During this season we will be continuing to celebrate communion, but rather than weekly, we will be celebrating communion approximately once per month. To maintain health and safety for all present, we will be using individually pre-packaged wafers and juice to celebrate communion.

III. From the Sanctuary to the Parking Lot: Post-Service Procedures

1. *Post-Service Prayer*

The sanctuary will remain open after the service for those who wish to remain for a few minutes of prayer and quiet reflection following the service.

2. *Exiting the Sanctuary*

At the duration of the service, parishioners are asked to exit the sanctuary following the directional arrows up the hallway towards the main entrance.

3. *Post-Service Fellowship*

Due to public health guidelines and COVID-19 restrictions, we will not be having post-service coffee and snack time until further notice and the café area will be temporarily closed on Sunday mornings. Those wishing to fellowship with others following the service are kindly asked to do so in the parking lot to avoid congestion in the entranceway of the facility.

A Final Word

While I think we would all agree that this season we find ourselves in and the restrictions and protocols we have put in place for Sunday worship are less than ideal, we can be grateful for the opportunity to continue to have the freedom to gather for worship.

While these are challenging times, they are also times of great opportunity for the church to bear witness to the faithful presence and relentless love of Jesus. I hope and pray we will continue to keep our eyes on Jesus as we discern meaningful ways to worship and serve one another and our community.

Grace and peace to you,

Pastor Jason

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. – Phil. 1:6