

Opening Church – A Proposal

**To be presented to BMC after second hour on August 22nd and
discussed on August 29th during second hour**

Introduction

We are all looking forward to returning to in-person worship at BMC. At the moment of this document's drafting, Ontario is in Step 3 of its roadmap to reopening, which stipulates that Religious Services can open "at capacity" with 2 meters distance being always maintained for those outside of each other's households. As well, Waterloo Region continues to have a mask by-law. With these factors in mind, the Opening Church Ad-hoc Committee discussed the below plan for return to worship. Given the changing nature of the pandemic and the uncertainties the Delta variant brings with it, we will all need to be patient with each other as we do our best to plan to gather safely.

The Plan

The Opening Church Committee would like to propose re-opening on September 12th, 2021 with a maximum capacity of 35 people. The date was chosen in order to allow for adequate time to discuss the re-opening as a congregation and make any adjustments to the plan if necessary. The number was chosen to accommodate the requirement of a 2-meter distance between everyone not already in a household together. This number may change as we test out the capacity. To ensure that we do not exceed capacity, those who wish to come to in-person worship will initially be asked to register by email or phone with Claudia Thum by September 9th, 2021.

Given the Regional by-law mandating masks as well as the need to respect the safety of all attending, everyone must wear a mask. When people arrive, they will be asked to hand sanitize and head to the sanctuary and sit in designated seating areas. Those who arrive first will be invited to the front sections of the sanctuary and the rest will fill in the seats from the front to the back. Ushers will assist in this process. After the service, the chairs will be sanitized for future use on the following week.

During the service, much will happen as it usually does. We will sing (masks on), pray, learn, and share as usual. Those attending online through zoom will be displayed through the projector at the front of the service and will be able to participate both visibly and audibly throughout the service through song, prayer, sharing, etc. The goal is to try to integrate the zoom attendees and in-person attendees as much as is possible.

Initially, there will be no 9:30 Sunday school and no second hour but this may change as we refine in-person worship. A possible alternative to the usual second hour time would be to offer a Sunday evening (7pm) discussion time. Bathrooms will be available as usual and parents with young children who are needing to move around more freely will be invited to use the nursery or, if a larger space is needed to maintain distance, the basement assembly room where the service can be heard through speakers. After the service, the ushers will help people exit the sanctuary back to front and sanitize on the way out of the service. Any visiting must happen outside of the building.

Summary of Plan

1. In-person services will resume on September 12th, 2021.
2. Everyone who wishes to attend must register with Claudia Thum by email or phone by September 9th.
3. Masks must be worn.
4. Everyone must sanitize coming in and exiting from the building.
5. The sanctuary will be organized in seating sections for different individuals and households to allow for a 2-meter distance.
6. The seats will be filled front to back and emptied back to front and sanitized after use.
7. Worship will happen through a hybrid in-person/zoom model.
8. If necessary, children and families can use the nursery and/or the basement assembly room.
9. Visiting is encouraged once outside of the building.