

September 2, 2020

Greetings Sundre United Church friends in faith,

It has been a different kind of summer for most of us, however I hope you have all found moments of rest and renewal, for both body and spirit. As we look ahead to returning to worship at the church, I wanted to let you know what things will look like as we move into the next stage of COVID 19 guidelines.



As schools resume, I know that for our families, there are difficult decisions to be made around sending your children, having them do on-line learning, or home-schooling. There are a lot of unknowns in that, and as a community of faith, we hold teachers, students and parents, administration, and support staff in our prayers.

In the church, there will be some who have similar struggles around the decision to come to worship. I know there are some among us who live with compromised immune systems, or who have family members that live with higher risk factors. For some, joining us for worship may not be possible yet. And those folks, too, are in our prayers. Dr. Deena Hinshaw, with AHS reminds us that there is an age factor in determining risk levels, and she recommends that those over 65 carefully consider participation in large group activities. So, for those who decide it's not yet practical or safe to return to church, we understand and we hold them in prayer.

With all that in mind, our plan is to resume in-person worship on September 13. In keeping with Alberta Health Services (AHS) and United Church guidelines, it is strongly suggested that we limit our indoor gathering time to less than our usual hour, so I will endeavour to offer worship of 40 to 45 minutes maximum.



When you arrive, please enter through the open door, either main east door or north parking lot door, minding the distance between your family/cohort/bubble and the people ahead of you and behind you. Please maintain that 2 metre distance.

You will be greeted in the entry way and asked to complete a screening form – basically a health self-assessment, modeled after what AHS uses, and you will be asked to use hand sanitizer and wear a mask while moving about the building. Those forms will be kept for 2 weeks, in the safe, and only referred to if we have a case of COVID and they are needed for contact tracing. They will not leave the church. After 2 weeks, they will be shredded.

Also, we will have some masks available, however you are welcome to bring your own reusable ones. **Masks are required to be worn whenever you are walking around in the building, and you are strongly encouraged to keep them on when seated.**

As you enter the sanctuary you will be seated by an usher. We will be filling spaces from front to back, with households /cohorts/bubbles sitting together, and maintaining 2 metre distance between, including seating in every 2nd pew.

Once you are seated you may remove your mask, but you will be expected to put it on again if you leave your seat or if you are visiting with others from outside your household before or after worship begins.

For the first while, we will not be having Sunday School. Children are welcome to be with us for the whole of worship. I am trying to determine how I will do the time for children in a socially distant way (easier in Sundre than in Olds), so please, also bring some quiet activities, books, etc. for your children.

For offering, we will not be passing the plate, and will continue to ask you to place your gifts to the church in the offering plate at the front entryway.

Should you need to use the washroom please wash thoroughly, and then use the sanitizer wipes provided, on the taps and door handle.



We will NOT be singing. We will listen to hymns played and you may hum, however if you do so, it would be preferred that you wear your mask.

It has been strongly advised that we NOT celebrate communion yet. It has been a very long time since we have done so, however food / beverage handling is high risk, and it is very difficult to maintain social distance while serving.

Following worship, you will be asked to leave in order, back pews first, front pews last. There will be no coffee time, and you are encouraged to leave the building directly after worship.

I need to be honest and tell you this will not be the church experience you had hoped we would be returning to. It's not what I imagined we'd be returning to, either. There is a sense of grief around that. We are not alone in that. Every faith community has been struggling with this. The most important factor in how we return is the well-being of all, and that we do our utmost to maintain a safe environment for everyone who comes to our building.

I will continue to post my sermon to the website for those who are not ready to return to in-person worship, and we are hoping to video record the weekly worship in either Olds or Sundre, once we resolve our technical difficulties.

As we plan that opening day – it is important that we have volunteers to be greeters at the front and back entrances to the church, receiving the health form, etc. and directing people to their seats.

We will need **2 greeters** (one for each entrance); and **1 usher** each week. If you are willing to help please call the church office and **let Kathy know. 403-638-4428.**

As we move forward in faith, I am grateful for the presence of the Spirit, surrounding us with love and hope. I will keep you informed of any more news to share as it arises.

Blessings,

Tammy

