

## PREPARING YOUR CHURCH FOR THE NEXT PHASE

May 21, 2020

### INTRODUCTION

As you have likely heard in the news, the governments of Ontario and Quebec have begun rolling out their plans, “[A Framework for Re-Opening our Province](#)” (ON) and “[Gradual resumption of activities under the COVID-19-related pause](#)” (QC). As a result, many of you have been asking CBOQ, “How and when can we gather? How can we run our ministries? What does this mean for our church building?”

To continue to care for you, our family of churches, we are here to help you access the information and assistance you need as you shift into the next phase. Until there is clarity from the government on the specifics of when and how places of worship can gather face to face, we need to continue to live with some uncertainty. However, here are some questions to ask, as well as checklists and links to important documents to help your church navigate what comes next.

### THREE LEADERSHIP TEAM QUESTIONS

As your leadership team meets online, spend some time going through the following questions, specific to your context. Namely, during this time:

- How can we provide consistent, deliberate and directive leadership?
- What due diligence questions need addressing as we operate?
- To what is God inviting us and with what is God challenging us?
  - See “Considering How to Shift to the Next Phase? *Do these Three Things First?*”

### A CHECKLIST OF THINGS TO CONSIDER

#### STAYING INFORMED ON GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES

- Discuss how your church is reviewing and interpreting the provincial “reopening” guidelines
- Clarify how your church is reviewing and interpreting municipal health department guidelines
- Consider what other sources of information should we be consulting
  - Refer to “[A Framework for Reopening our Province](#)” or “[Gradual resumption of activities under the COVID-19-related pause](#),” as applicable.

### MOVING YOUR CHURCH TO THE NEXT PHASE

- How will you gather – fully virtual or a hybrid of virtual/in person – during the next phase
  - See “Questions for Worship Gatherings and Other Ministries”
- Consider the purposes your building is used for (e.g. “house of worship,” place of employment, special event/rental, ministry programming, community hub) and what reopening your building might look like for each purpose
- Consult with your insurance provider regarding any updates or requirements before reopening your building
- Consider what policies and procedures could be developed now that will prepare you to reopen your building when that time comes
  - See “Checklist for Reopening Your Building”
- As your church considers moving worship back into its church building or a hybrid of virtual/in-person, determine if this is a task the Board needs to lead, or if it would be better for your church to develop a team
  - See “Developing a Next Phase Team”

## CONSIDERING HOW TO SHIFT TO THE NEXT PHASE? *DO THESE 3 THINGS FIRST*

The COVID-19 crisis has created challenges and opportunities for your congregation. You've had to navigate how to interpret government restrictions, how to provide worship opportunities without gathering face to face and how to shepherd your congregation through this disruptive experience.

We don't know exactly what life will look like for congregations as governments loosen some of the physical distancing requirements. What we do know is that there will be more questions, challenges and opportunities that will stretch you as leaders to go to God for guidance. You will need to review government documents, be in dialogue with your insurance agent and develop sound safety practices. Through all of this, your congregation is also looking for you to provide stable leadership.

### DIRECT, PROTECT, REFLECT

Your congregational leadership team is always tasked with three distinct and overlapping areas of responsibility:



#### DIRECT

As a leadership team, you were called by your congregation to **DIRECT** the congregation to live out God's mission in your community

#### PROTECT

As organizational leaders, appointed by the membership, you are called to **PROTECT** your people, the church's vision and resources by providing sound governance, management and operations

#### REFLECT

You have been anointed for this season to help your congregation **REFLECT** on who God is calling you to be and what God is calling you to do as a congregation.

### ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Keep asking these three questions:

1. How can we provide consistent, deliberate and directive leadership to our people as we prepare to re-open? (**DIRECT**)
2. What due diligence questions need addressing with governments, our insurance agents and the way we operate as we consider re-opening? (**PROTECT**)
3. What is God's invitation and challenge to us through all of this? (**REFLECT**)

"My greatest hope is not that our churches will get back to normal, it's that churches will discover what God might be inviting them into."

-Rev. Dr. Dallas Friesen

## QUESTIONS FOR RETURNING TO IN-PERSON WORSHIP GATHERINGS & OTHER MINISTRIES

### WORSHIP GATHERINGS

- What will be the roles, expectations and placement of greeters?
- Depending on the regulations provided by the government, how will we develop a process for helping people flow in and out of the building?
- As the number of people that can gather in social settings changes how will we appropriately respond?
  - Some churches have suggested, if the entire congregation cannot worship at once, that they will invite selected small groups or “care lists” to attend.
  - What criteria would we use to develop a list of who can come and who cannot come to a worship gathering?
  - How will we communicate this to the congregation?
- If you cannot have the entire congregation gather in-person how will you host a virtual and physical worship space?
  - Is your church considering “parking lot church?” Be sure to check out the [Ontario Government regulation](#).
  - What equipment (hardware, software) do you need to have a hybrid service?
  - What personnel do you need to run both?
- What adjustments might need to be made regarding communion, baptisms, choirs, worship teams, etc.?

### CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES

- Do you need to develop new policies or procedures around nurseries?
- What kind, if any, programming can you offer for children’s ministry?
- If you offer children’s programming, what are the new procedures you need to implement with children?
- What changes need to be made for sanitization of children’s area and materials?
- How will you minimize traffic at drop off/pick up?
- Do you have sufficient programming space to ensure adequate physical distancing?
- Are there any new safety considerations you need in place for volunteers?
- Do you have an “unwell child” policy in place?

- How will you train volunteers for new procedures and policies?
- What are the expectations of parents in knowing the policies and procedures in place? How will you ensure you have effectively communicated this with them?

### YOUTH GROUPS

- What changes are needed in your child protection policy? Social media policy?
- Do you host exclusively in-person, exclusively online and/or hybrid experiences? If hybrid, how do you allow for meaningful engagement?
- What socially appropriate means can be done for mentoring situations?
- What service opportunities can be done online? With a small group if small gatherings are allowed? What safety measures are needed?
- If you are transporting individuals, how will those vehicles be ensured for safety (cleaning, etc.)?
- What is your contingency if a planned in-person program needs to be moved online? How will that change be communicated?
- If internet service is not available, what contingency could you use?

### MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS

- What will you do if some volunteers step down from their previously held ministries?
- Do we need to develop new staff or volunteer roles that will help with relaunching our space or programs?

### HANDLING MONEY

- How are we encouraging electronic payment methods?
- How do you collect the offering if you can’t “pass the plate?”
- If we provide physical giving stations that what safety precautions do we need to provide those handling money or cheques?

### HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [7 Strategic Questions Churches Need to Ask About Reopening](#)

## CHECKLIST FOR REOPENING YOUR BUILDING

### CHURCH BUILDINGS AS WORSHIP SPACES

- Adequate hand-washing stations with appropriate signage
- Plan to regularly sanitize and sterilize the building before people use it
- Develop a plan to sanitize the space in real time
- Create a check-list of areas that need to be cleaned
- Ensure appropriate supply and access to relevant cleaning supplies

### CHURCH BUILDINGS AS PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT

- Reviewed our Health and Safety obligations as an employer
- Clarified health and safety precautions do we need in place for our staff

### CHURCH BUILDINGS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

- Clarified safety measures do we need in place before we can host special events (e.g. weddings, funerals)
- Church Buildings as Community Hub/Rentals
- Clarified and implemented safety measures and insurance measures required for outside groups using our space

## DEVELOPING A NEXT PHASE TEAM

The task of shifting your church into the next phase will include many different factors. Many of your leaders have gone the extra mile over this last season of ministry. As your church plans for shifting to the next phase, you might consider developing a Next Phase Team. Your Board may want to provide a team with the mandate to consider options and next steps. They may want to develop unique job descriptions and invite specific people to serve who are gifted in one of those areas. This could be a tremendous opportunity to invite people to serve in new ways. You will want to clearly communicate what roles and tasks you are looking for. Provide the team with a mandate. Set term limits for this team, with an opportunity to extend it as needed.

## NEXT PHASE TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

### TEAM LEAD

- Has the church leadership and congregation respects (could be a board member or pastor, but it might be more helpful to find someone outside of those groups—a wise congregant)
- Has capacity to navigate vast amounts of information from different sources
- Strong relational capacity to ease people's fears and anxieties and help conversations continue toward action

### INFORMATION PROCESSOR

- One (or more) person responsible for finding and processing the latest information
- Able to source information from governments, organizations offering helpful ideas, insurance agents, etc.
- Able to process information by sifting through the information to find what is most relevant for the decision makers
- Responsible for monitoring the latest announcements

### COMMUNICATIONS LEAD

- Responsible for communicating all pertinent information.
- Assists with directing specific communications to specific audiences (members & adherents, staff, community partners, rental groups, vendors, etc.)
- Developing a simple opportunity for feedback to respond to questions and concerns that result from this shift, and for rationale on strategy.
- Remember not all feedback is equal. Some feedback needs to be considered. Some feedback needs to be acknowledged as received but not brought to this group or the board.

### POLICY & PROCEDURES LEAD

- Responsible for reviewing your current policies and procedures.
- Leads the development of new procedures that may result from the COVID-19 pandemic.

### VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

- Responsible for developing volunteer teams (could be one or two people)
- Provides clear direction for volunteers.
- Congregants will be eager to help once restrictions are lifted but they will need clear directions on the ways they can help. While you cannot anticipate all the work that will need to happen. You could create some check-lists of items you know the church will need to tackle along the way.
- Encourages church to break the "80/20 rule."
- Many people will be eager to help if they are given clear direction, clear communication, if they know what is needed of them, if they are given training or guidance on the tasks and if they are consistently thanked.