

November 18, 2020

Administration

Secretariat

Dear Pastors,

Our Provincial COVID-19 guidelines continue to evolve as the cases increase. To keep Ontario safe and open, the government announced a new COVID-19 response framework, which allows the province to rank health units based on case numbers and trends, using colour-coded categories.

- **Green (Prevent)**- At this level, we will see a state similar to the former Stage 3, with loosened restrictions and only certain high-risk locations remaining closed.
- **Yellow (Protect)**- At this level, we will see increased measures and guidelines for businesses or organizations that are open.
- **Orange (Restrict)**- At this level, we will see restrictions enhanced further from the "protect" level.
- **Red (Control)**- At this level, we return to a modified Stage 2, with further restrictions and the closure of some businesses or organizations.
- **Gray (Lockdown)**- At this level, we return to a modified Stage 1, and a declaration of emergency will be considered.

Please remain abreast of your church's region's status and try to keep your members up to date.

The Ontario Conference supports and strongly recommends the more cautious and safest approach of moving our services online until further notice. If your church falls within the orange or red zone classifications for those already approved for in-person worship, your church board needs to immediately ramp up your protection with respect to the restricted guidelines as listed below.

Worship Services: Religious services are allowed indoors, but only up to 30 percent of the building's capacity to a maximum of 50 people. It is strongly recommended that our services be no more than one and a half hours. All other existing Ontario Conference guidelines remain strictly in place. No socializing is to take place after the service. Attendees should leave the building and parking lot promptly. Apart from baptism, communion, and baby dedication (conducted according to our previously released guidelines), all other non-essential special services/events are to be suspended until further notice.

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Funerals: Funeral services are allowed indoors, but only up to 30 percent of the building's capacity to a maximum of 10 people. All other existing Ontario Conference guidelines remain in place (up to 25 people are allowed for outdoor services providing physical distancing can be observed). No repasts are permitted until further notice.

Weddings: Weddings are allowed indoors, but only up to 30 percent of the building's capacity with a maximum of 10 people (up to 25 people are allowed for outdoor services providing physical distancing can be observed). No receptions are permitted until further notice. All other existing Ontario Conference guidelines remain in place.

Attendee Vigilance: People not in hospital but those who have symptoms and are waiting for test results or have had close contact with someone who tested positive for coronavirus are not to attend any in-person church gatherings.

It is hard to differentiate between flu symptoms and COVID symptoms. Anyone experiencing any of the symptoms and anyone in that household should not attend any in-person church gatherings.

Eager Beaver/Adventurer/Pathfinder and Master Guide Meetings: Remain online until further notice.

All continuation of in-person worship services are on a week-to-week basis. Local churches should be in a constant state of readiness to return to online services as we track the public health advisories.

God will reward our efforts as we continue to be good stewards and practice being our brothers' keeper.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

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