**Willoughby Church Guidance for Holding Low Risk Worship Services – November 2021**

**Guidelines for Worship, Coffee Fellowship and General Church Activities**

**Positive Prevention Measures**

Implementing positive prevention measures can keep worship services a low risk for COVID-19 transmission. Ministry leaders, staff and volunteers are encouraged to facilitate open conversations about positive prevention measures people can take to show that they are mindful of the health and wellbeing of others in their community and decide which ones will be in place during their worship services. These measures are outlined below.

1. Everyone should stay home if they are sick or not feeling well. Encourage anyone with symptoms of illness to use the BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool or the BCCDC When to Get Tested for COVID-19 resource to know if they should seek testing for COVID-19. Include  reminders in written communications (e.g., newsletters, bulletins, etc.) and hang posters at   entrances to ensure everyone checks if they’re feeling sick before attending in-person services.
2. Everyone should clean their hands frequently, especially before touching faces. Washing with regular soap and water reduces the spread of illness. If soap and water aren’t available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content can be used on hands that are not visibly dirty.
3. Everyone kindergarten age and older is to wear a mask during indoor worship services and when moving about in all common areas. The only exceptions being during the preaching of the Word and while actively eating or drinking during coffee fellowship in the Fellowship Hall after the worship service*.*  Many businesses and organizations continue to request or require people to wear a mask to access indoor services. Masks are also helpful if a person becomes ill and needs to cover their coughs or sneezes. During the week all staff and visitors to Willoughby Church need to wear a mask in all common areas of the church. No masks are required in individual office spaces and, subject to agreement by all parties, no masks are required while meeting others in these meeting spaces.
4. Give others space. Not everyone will feel comfortable being close to others, including sitting, standing shoulder-to shoulder or shaking hands. While there are no size limits on worship services (indoor or outdoor), everyone is encouraged to spread out in the available space before, during, and after services. Also in consideration and respect of others there should be no physical contact during the greeting portion of the service.
5. Keep things clean. Regular cleaning and disinfecting can help prevent the spread of illnesses, including COVID-19. Frequently touched surfaces such as toilets, sink tap handles, doorknobs, light switches and tables should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily. Other surfaces should be cleaned regularly and when visibly dirty. More information on cleaning and disinfecting is available from the B.C. Centre for Disease Control’s (BCCDC) website.

**Communion**

Willoughby Church’s current practicesare deemed to be low risk as long as the preparers of the communion meal practice Food Safe practices and the servers wear masks. For those who continue to feel uncomfortable with this practice single-use cups or offering pre-packaged beverages will be offered. We fully understand that not everyone will feel ready to return to communion without confidence in the prevention measures yet, so we will attempt to offer a mix of options to meet the needs of members.

**Regular Review**

Regularly, our Willoughby Church Covid Team and Council will continue to monitor and evaluate the risks of covid and the provincial requirements to discern how we might best be community together in the safest way possible and will communicate any changes to the congregation as soon as possible. The objective is to work to inform and to educate the congregation on the reasons to comply with these guidelines in order to protect the health of the community.

**Additional Comments on Positive Prevention Measures**

**Singing and Musical Instruments**

Activities such as singing and playing musical instruments are not restricted for worship services, though they are known to have some risk of transmission. To lower the risk, these activities should take place outdoors, or indoors in a well-ventilated space. The continued use of physical distancing can also be considered to further lower the risk and/or if it brings additional comfort to those participating.. All participants should consider their own health and the health of those in the group when deciding whether or not to participate.

**Food and Beverages:**

**Preparation:**

COVID-19 doesn’t appear to be transmitted by eating food contaminated with the virus, however, it is important that basic food safety practices continue to be implemented when preparing and serving food and beverages.

Preparing: Practice can return to what was in place before the COVID-19 pandemic. Ensure those preparing food clean their hands often and are not sick. Additional food safety information is available from BCCDC. FOODSAFE Level 1 covers important food safety and worker safety information. It is a helpful resource for those seeking education and training on basic food safety practices.

**Serving:**

Practice can return to what was in place before the COVID-19 pandemic, including allowing buffets and large groups at a single table. Ensure those serving food clean their hands often, wear a mask, and are not sick. Continue to ensure those being served clean their hands before using common touch items (like tongs or serving spoons at a buffet) and before eating, and that high-touch surfaces (like tongs or serving spoons) are cleaned and disinfected regularly. Encourage participants to not share food and to continue giving others space.

**Eating Together:**

The greatest risk with eating together is the close social interaction and related sharing of airspace with someone is unknowingly carrying the virus. As much as possible, masks should be worn when not seated, and when not actively eating or drinking.

**Communion Cups:**

Many churches implemented innovative ways to provide communion and/or the use of shared or common cups while reducing COVID-19 risk, such as using single-use cups or offering pre-packaged beverages. It is encouraged that pastors continue with these approaches (in consultation with their congregation, staff, and volunteers). Not everyone will feel ready to return to communion without prevention measures yet, so consider offering a mix of options to meet the needs of members