

RE-GATHERING OF THE CHURCH

*note: change of terms from 're-open' to 're-gather' (we were never closed just out of the building)

A very important READ prior to re-gathering

As we all are aware, we received word on Monday June 8 that the Government of Ontario is now allowing churches to reopen in the Niagara Region as of Friday, June 12. We praise God that we are now allowed to publicly re-gather for worship once more!

However, we are asking for your patience as we re-gather. As our Leadership Team has officially stated that we will revisit how stage 2 is going in our area with hopes of possibly having a 'soft' re-gathering following the Civic Holiday in August.

First of all, remember that we are a little out of practice leading a live worship service! Also, for the time being, at least, we must factor the potential spread of COVID 19 in how we manage our worship gatherings.

Church simply will not be the same as it was prior to March 15! It will likely be some time before things return to "church as usual" (i.e., back to pre-COVID-19 norms). The COVID-19 pandemic in its present form will pass. One day we'll look back on this time and see clearly that God was with us and was working in our midst for good. Knowing this, we can turn to him today and ask him to give us the discernment, compassion, and faith to make the right decisions for our churches at this time. We ask that you be gracious as we make the transition back to weekly worship gathering.

Also, please remember that the decision to attend the public regathering of the Port BIC Church Sunday morning service is **your** personal decision to make. Although we will need to take attendance to facilitate contact tracing purposes (in case someone who attends begins exhibiting symptoms later), we understand if you don't feel ready to join us for worship.

The following recommendations might help you in making your decision:

a. If you're in a high-risk demographic, we would encourage you to not physically attend at this time but take advantage of our online and DVD distribution options.

More vulnerable individuals include those who are in assisted living and nursing home facilities and those with underlying health conditions such as diabetes, heart/lung disease, or other respiratory illnesses. They also include people who have compromised immune systems.

b. When you return to Port BIC Church services, you'll find that things are not the same as before. The staff and leadership of our Church are attempting to make the best decisions for everyone from both a health and spiritual standpoint, according to God's Word ... while maintaining the freedom of personal responsibility and diversity of conclusions around the recommendations regarding COVID 19... which continue to change. We do ask that in all things we follow the directive of Jesus to Love our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27).

For Everyone Coming Back to Port BIC Church Services: 13 important points

1. **How are you feeling?** Complete a **self-assessment** prior to attending (see below) and please stay home if you have any symptoms, suspect you could be ill or have been recently exposed to someone who has been unwell.

Self-Assessment Questions:

*Are you feeling fevered/chills. Do you have a new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, nasal congestion, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, abdominal pain, difficulty swallowing, new loss of taste/smell, conjunctivitis (pink eye)

*Are you or any of your household members currently in mandated isolation?

*Have you or any of your household members travelled out of province or country in last 14 days?

* If yes to any of the above, **Do not come to church,**

Call COVID Call-in Centre or email occhealth@nwhealthcare.ca

2. **Parking.** You will be asked to park only in the front parking lot and enter the church building from the front as per ushers will direct you. (Staff and volunteers will park out back ONLY)

3. **Sanitization.** The Port BIC Church facility will be sanitized. High traffic areas, including restroom facilities, will be disinfected prior to and between each of the services. [However, we request that everyone use the bathroom at home prior to coming to limit usage of the church's facilities.]

4. **Entering.** You will be asked to affirm your registration as you enter acknowledging your seats are reserved. Sanitize your hands. Enter the auditorium with direction of ushers.

5. **Masks.** Please remember to practice social distancing. We are asking EVERYONE to wear face masks or shields. Please bring your own. Please refrain from handshaking and hugging and other forms of physical contact for the time being even if the other person gives you permission to do so.

6. **Singing.** No singing allowed according to Health Ontario memo. **Bulletins** will be placed on your chairs before you arrive. **Mail boxes and library** are not available at this time.

7. We have **suspended our coffee and snack** fellowship time after service for the time being.

8. We will have **hand sanitizing stations** at the auditorium entrance.

9. **Offering box.** We will be unable to pass offering plates during the service. Please deposit offering envelopes into the offering box as you enter the auditorium on your way in.

10. There will be **no Children's Ministries** (Nursery, Sunday School or Junior Church) at this time.

11. **Seating capacity:** We are allowed to have 30% of our full auditorium capacity (75 - 80 people at a time). We are therefore putting the following practices in place:

Registration/reservation of seating - We will ask everyone to register via email (portbic@gmail.com) or call the church office at 905-835-2362 before Friday at 1:00 p.m to reserve your seats for the service of your preference. RESERVATIONS ARE ON A FIRST COME FIRST SERVED BASIS! Remember parents, we ask that you always keep your children with you.

When you register – you are agreeing to follow protocol. Thank you!

12. We will aim to keep **our services** to less than one hour.

13. **Exiting.** At the conclusion of the service, each row will be dismissed separately. Please do not leave behind any paper, trash, or personal belongings. Please leave the building as soon as you are dismissed.

NOTE: (we are all learning as we take these steps...we have NOT done this before)

PLEASE UNDERSTAND WE ALL WILL NEED PATIENCE AS WE RE-GATHER.

Directing and seating, waiting your turn and leaving – important protocol

If you do not want that hassle then maybe your option is to stay at home until we have had a few tries or until our restrictions are completely lifted and we can come back the 'old' way again.

Again, thank you for your patience. It has been a long 4 1/2 months as we have awaited the go ahead to re-gathering for worship and we now have many things to keep in mind. We look forward to worshipping with you again!

Brian Lofthouse, Lead Pastor