



December 24, 2020

Administration

Secretariat

Dear Pastors, Bible Workers and Elders,

In an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19, Premier Doug Ford announced that starting at 12:01 am on Sabbath, December 26th, 2020, all of Ontario will be elevated to the Gray Zone. The provincewide lockdown will remain in place until at least January 23rd, 2021, for the 27 public health unit regions in Southern Ontario and until January 9th, 2021, in Northern Ontario. During this time, the Chief Medical Officer of Health will be closely monitoring the number of COVID-19 cases to see if the lockdown measures need to be extended. It is prudent that we plan for a prolonged period in the Gray Zone.

The Ontario Conference is still strongly recommending the more cautious and safest approach of moving all of our services online until further notice. Notwithstanding, in regards to weddings, funerals and other religious services, rites or ceremonies where physical distancing can be maintained, the provincial lockdown order states that the following gathering limits are permissible:

- 10 people indoors;
- 10 people outdoors;
- Drive-in services, rites or ceremonies permitted, subject to certain conditions;
- Virtual services permitted.

Should your church continue to use the building for worship, live streaming, pre-recording or any other purpose, the maximum number of people allowed in the building at the same time is ten (10), irrespective of where they may be situated within the facility. All other provincial, municipal, and Conference COVID measures remain strictly in place.

Concerning baptisms- Public health authorities strongly discourage activities such as baptisms. However, if ordinances involving close physical contact must be performed, the pastor and the candidate must wear the appropriate personal protective equipment, which includes:

- **Surgical/procedure masks**
- **Goggles or Face Shields**
- **Overcoats or gown**
- **Gloves (change gloves after each candidate)**



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Procedures to be followed:

- **Please have the candidates sign the waiver provided with our previous baptismal guidelines. If the candidate is a minor, the parent or guardian is to sign.** (See waiver form attached)
- The officiating pastor/elder should not offer a prayer or pronouncement. An ordained elected elder or pastor with a current ministerial credential that is not officiating and is physically distanced should offer prayer and pronouncement.
- Only one candidate should be baptized at a time (unless a family grouping living in the same household).
- Officiating pastor/elder should baptize no more than five candidates in any given ceremony.
- The candidate must sanitize hands with hand sanitizer (60% alcohol or higher) for 20 seconds before entering the pool.
- For any towels, sheets, baptismgown, laundry etc., minimize shaking and disturbance.

Concerning Communion- If your church wants to hold a Communion service during the lockdown, it is recommended this be done virtually; this allows members and the online community to participate in the service from their homes. There are several ways a virtual Communion service can be done in a meaningful way; this could include having families prepare the emblems at their homes by providing them with the recipes. Some churches have created videos of the bread-making process or invited the members to prepare the elements together via Zoom. Others have delivered pre-packed emblems to the members.

- Follow this link to an example of a video of how to prepare the Communion bread
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYj7sdD6mDI>
- Here is a link to a clip of a Zoom Communion service
<https://tinyurl.com/y2kl95eh>
- It is crucial to urge those participating in the virtual Communion to maintain integrity with the chosen elements and preserve the service's sanctity.

It remains crucial that we at no time deviate from any of the prescribed guidelines.

Thank you for your usual support, and may God continue to give you wisdom, courage and strength to minister during these turbulent times.

We wish you and your families peace, comfort, and joy this Holiday Season!

Many Blessings,

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