

COVID-19 Guidelines from our MCBC Moderator, Gerry Grunau

Gerry has been sending letters to our churches since March 2020 regarding some guidelines for churches to take into consideration. Covid-19 has created a lot of uncertainty and fear, however, we know that God is with us every step of the way. Here are a few lines from the various letters.

- MCBC believes that participating and leading in our local and communities means standing in solidarity with the people working hard to limit the seriousness of this virus. From a public health perspective, cancelling our gatherings for a short time increases the health care system's ability to deal with any outbreaks by slowing down transmission.
- Taking action is a practical expression of loving our neighbours because we are limiting group meetings where transmission is likely. We are protecting ourselves and others we come in contact with, especially the elderly who, in this case, are most vulnerable.
- [Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy](#) - is extended until August 29, 2020
- Phase 2 begins and allows congregational gatherings up to fifty persons under the conditions of “**enhanced protocols**”. These protocols include, but are not limited to, no hugging, no handshakes, disinfection of common surfaces, vigorous encouragement to stay home when experiencing even mild sickness symptoms and sufficient distancing measures in the building, which could mean fewer persons per pew, or empty chairs in between.
- Excellent recommendations for churches can be found at the Christian and Missionary Alliance [CMA] Pacific District website <://pacificdistrict.ca/covid-19-church/>
- Your congregation should also be aware of the **Spirit of MDS [Mennonite Disaster Service] Fund** which will be available until August 31st. Maximum value grants of \$1,000 on an application basis -- [for information](#). (Note: Sherbrooke, Eden, Eben-Ezer and Peace Church on 52nd were able to receive a grant)
- Outdoor gatherings will also be **limited to fifty persons** in the foreseeable future.
- **Fifty persons** are the maximum in a building space at one time even if there is room in the space for more suitably distanced people. Tracking attendance at events is requested and records are to be held for 30 days in case tracing procedures are required
- One of the criteria for gatherings is to generate a **Covid-19 safety plan**. A template safety plan was provided.
- Our insurance coverage provider reminded us that liability coverage is in place **as long as** governmental and health authority guidelines are followed.
- Congregations using video productions need to consider the following information regarding using music resources in their productions. **Use of music by our churches need to follow copyright laws.**
- One thing of note is that no pre-recorded music may be included without the direct permission of the label owner and the song owner
- When you begin to open your church facilities up to rental groups again you may want to ensure that your rental groups also follow the BC Provincial Health Authority guidelines. Janette has an **acknowledgement/waiver** for your use if you wish. This has been reviewed by our lawyer who says it should be fine for a deterrent.
- **Phase 3 of the BC Restart Plan**. The message also included a requirement to continue with enhanced protocols such as physical distancing, wearing a mask when distancing is not possible, washing hands and staying home if sick. Gatherings with more than fifty people are still banned.
- Our benefits provider, RWAM, continues to care for MCBC by extending relief through continued reduced premiums.

- Many congregations are considering **in-person groupings under fifty persons**. In your leadership discussions, managing the risk of virus transmission should be considered a paramount feature in assessing your particular situation. Outdoor gatherings have less risk than indoor gatherings and zoom meetings have less risk than outdoor gatherings. And whenever there are relatively larger in-person gatherings, available space and washroom use become logistical complications.
- Part of the process of organizing in-person gatherings is developing a **Covid-19 safety plan** for your facility to judiciously mitigate the risks of transmission.
- A Church Recovery Plan designed for Langley Mennonite Fellowship can be adapted to your church.

Blessings on your deliberations as we all transition into decision situations which we have not previously encountered. May God's guidance be with you.