

Greetings, friends:

It is our great pleasure to announce that we will be reopening our church building for public worship starting on **August 9, 2020** at our usual 11:00am worship time!

Our church leadership—Session, Board of Managers, and our various church committees—are working to ensure the safest possible worship experience by following the current Covid-19 health mandates from the province of Ontario and the Thunder Bay Health Unit. This does mean that there will be several changes affecting our worshipping together and I will outline those changes below, so you know what to expect.

**Personal Actions.** We are asking that you please wear a non-medical mask to worship and make use of the hand sanitizers provided. Please sit at least two meters apart, unless you are sitting with other members of your household. We will have the pews helpfully marked for social distancing. If you need to use the washroom during worship, you may use the single-person washroom located in the church office, unless you require amenities like the diaper change table, or the large wheelchair accessible bathroom stall, both of which are located in the women's washroom in the basement. You are invited to dispose of your bulletin at the end of the service in the blue recycle bin instead of taking it home.

**Sanitizing High-Touch Surfaces.** High-touch surfaces like stair railings, door handles, and church pews will be regularly sanitized. The offering plate will not be passed person-to-person, but instead will be placed in a central location so that you can place your offering there before or after the service. We do also offer Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR) giving for those who are interested in giving electronically and are not already giving in this way. Due to sanitation issues, Bibles, hymn books and copies of Living Faith will be removed from the church pews.

**Restrictions Affecting Worship.** At the time of writing this, it has been strongly suggested that we limit or omit singing during worship. This will require the creative use of special music performances, instrumental hymns, or soft singing and we will do all we can to continue having engaging and impactful worship services. (Notice there is no restrictions against dancing...) For a while, there will be no communion, no coffee time after worship, and no Sunday school or nursery care. If we would like to linger after worship to visit with one another, we must be careful to maintain proper social distancing.

This is a constantly changing situation. As we move towards the fall, we may find that some of these restrictions are loosened. Alternately, we may find restrictions tightening in the event of a "second wave" of Covid-19. We will trust God to guide us through whatever may come.

As a final note: When we re-open in August, church attendance is not mandatory! If you are experiencing any symptoms or sicknesses, if you are immune-compromised, or in a high-risk age demographic, or if you are simply uncomfortable attending church at that time, you are more than welcomed to stay home. An devotional video will continue to be offered for the foreseeable future on the church website ([fpresbyterian.ca](http://fpresbyterian.ca)) and Facebook page ([firstchurchtbay](https://www.facebook.com/firstchurchtbay)).

May God continue to bless you with health and peace during these unprecedented times!

Grace and Peace,  
Rev. Susan Mattinson  
July 23, 2020