

Waterloo CRC Return-to-Church-Building Overview

Attending worship

When and how often will we have in-person church?

We will start a regular cadence of in-person church (with livestreaming) on September 12, 2021, with an every-second-Sunday pattern, alternating between in-person and fully-at-home-over-Zoom services. In-person (with livestream) will be on Sep. 12, Sep. 26, Oct. 10, Oct. 24, etc. We will stay informed on Ontario guidelines and try to remain flexible. If the “Fourth Wave” remains manageable, we may choose to increase frequency. If the opposite, we may choose to decrease frequency of in-person services.

Why can't we meet more/less often in person?

The Worship Team recognizes that some members of the congregation will want to meet in person every week, and others advocate a more cautious approach. The Worship Team feels that an every-second-Sunday pattern is a good start. We find it very difficult to project what the fall will look like, especially after school resumes, and so this seems the best option for now.

If I come in person, will I need to sign up ahead of time?

Yes. Initially, the process will be the same as last fall: email the church office (office@waterloocrc.org) and indicate the number of people from your family who will attend. Nelda will let people know if there is no longer capacity to accommodate them. The Worship Team is investigating web-based sign-up options, and we'll decide after a few weeks whether we need to switch sign-up methods.

Where will we worship?

We intend to use both the sanctuary and the Fellowship Hall as the worship space. The Ontario guidelines require us to maintain 2-meter-apart spacing in the building during services. There will be some single/pairs of chairs in the sanctuary, and some larger groupings for families. There will be tables with chairs in the Fellowship Hall. The thought is that these tables might be particularly helpful for families with small children (you can read more about this in the “What about nursery?” answer below).

Can I still worship if I choose not to come in person?

Yes! We have invested in the livestream technology in the sanctuary with the intent of using it every time we have an in-person service going forward. You will have a choice of joining from home over Zoom or over YouTube—the experience will be the same, but only the Zoom option will allow you to type prayers into the Chat window.

Church access

When I enter the church, what will I need to do?

When you enter the church, there will be a sign-in sheet to record your presence. We will continue to offer hand sanitizer at the door. There will **not** be a temperature check. If you have symptoms, please stay home.

Will I need to wear a mask?

Yes. Masks must be worn when you are inside the church.

Must I be vaccinated?

Waterloo CRC's leadership cannot emphasize strongly enough how much we encourage full vaccination. We ask that everyone who is eligible for vaccination and who does not have a health condition preventing vaccination be double vaccinated. We ask that nonvaccinated members of the congregation remain at home and worship with us via the livestream technology. We are not asking for proof of vaccination at this time and trust that our congregation loves and respects one another and will act accordingly.

All service participants on the stage, however—that is, singers, musicians, preachers, worship leaders and anyone else who comes on the stage—must be fully vaccinated. We believe this is the safest option since these people will be unmasked for portions of the service. Again, we will not ask for proof of vaccination at this time, but we expect everyone on stage to follow this rule.

During the service

Can I sing?

Yes. After consulting multiple other churches, and given our 2-meter-apart spacing, we feel that singing with masks on is safe.

Will the service participants on the stage be masked?

No. Singers on the stage will have a plexiglass barrier between them and the congregation. The worship leader will stand at a microphone in the corner of the sanctuary (parking lot side) and be a significant distance from the first row of chairs. In addition, we ask that anyone on stage be fully vaccinated. We feel that these measures are sufficient to maintain safety while allowing service participants to be effective in their roles.

What about nursery?

There will be no nursery offered for at least September and October.

For now, there will be tables in the Fellowship Hall, and we invite families with younger children to sit at those tables during the service if they choose. Of course, everyone of all ages is welcome in the sanctuary as well, but the Worship Team thought that the tables might offer a surface for coloring/crafts for young children and allow children more freedom of movement, while still maintaining a 2-meter distance.

We'll see how this goes! We will try to resume the nursery program (at a reduced capacity) as soon as we can, assuming we have enough volunteers and are able to continue to adhere to Safe Church policies.

If you think your children might enjoy crafts/coloring, please bring supplies from home for now. We'll work on a standardized program for later.

What about Sunday School?

The Education Ministry is looking for a new Sunday School coordinator. If interested, please contact Lisa Eelkema (leelkema@gmail.com)! For September and October, we don't anticipate running Sunday School in the church during the service. When the program does resume, classrooms will be at a reduced capacity, with the same caveat about volunteers and Safe Church policies mentioned above.

How will communion work?

This has been a topic of considerable conversation at Worship Team meetings! For the time being, in-person congregants will be asked to bring their own bread and juice/wine from home. The church will purchase prepackaged, single-serving juice/bread packets for anyone who forgets to bring the elements from home.

How will the offering work?

We will have baskets at the front of the sanctuary for the offering. We will continue to make the offering a core portion of the service, and not an afterthought with baskets at the door on the way out. Giving is an essential act of worship! We will no longer require everyone in the sanctuary to walk past the baskets—only those with cash/envelopes to bring forward will come to the front. Based on number of attendees, we may need to rethink the number/placement of baskets in the future.

How will prayer time work?

Prayer will follow this format:

- Those in the sanctuary are welcome to come to a microphone at the front and share prayer requests. They must remain masked during this process.
- Those at home connected through Zoom are welcome to share prayer requests via the Chat.
- A volunteer in the sanctuary will monitor the Chat prayers and read them aloud from the microphone in the sanctuary. The Chat window itself will not be projected on the wall of the sanctuary.

In reflecting on how this went last fall, the Worship Team felt that the Chat text was too hard to read for in-person congregants (even at the maximum 200% setting) and the presence of non-prayer-related comments in the Chat took away from the prayer-time atmosphere.

I'm concerned that the streaming and sound technicians might be overwhelmed. How can I help?

The streaming and sound teams would love to have more volunteers. Training will be provided. Please talk with Tim Fisher (timfromwaterloo@gmail.com).

After the service and during the week

Will there be coffee and fellowship in the Fellowship Hall after the service?

No. When the service concludes, in-person attendees will be asked to leave the building (maintaining 2-meter distancing). Distanced conversation in the parking lot is encouraged! For the time being, there is no plan to offer coffee as a program run by the church.

When will other programs begin at the church?

The program leaders for other aspects of church life are actively thinking about how to run programs safely. If you have questions, speak to Lisa Eelkema (Education Ministry lead, leelkema@gmail.com); Katrina Blankespoor (Youth Ministry lead, kblankespoor@gmail.com); or Carolyn Kleefman (Community Ministry lead, kleefman@yahoo.ca).

Can I use the church for my program or event?

Church use outside of Sunday-morning worship needs to be approved by the church executive. If you would like to use the church, please contact council clerk Andrew White at cleck@waterloocrc.org for more information.

Note that church programs will have priority over non-church-related uses. In addition, use will be subject to capacity limits based on the nature of the event, and we anticipate only one event will be possible each day to allow for enhanced cleaning between events.

Other questions

How will we handle Student Welcome Sunday?

In consultation with Rev. Brian Bork, the Worship Team is planning on the end of October for a student-focused service.

Are ventilation improvements being made at the church?

The Stewardship Team is investigating ventilation units that could complement the existing HVAC systems at the church. In addition, they are upgrading the air filters on the three HVAC units to the highest level of filtration.

If I have questions or concerns about the worship format, how can I share them?

Please talk to any member of the Worship Team: Pastor Vicki, Dave Jaarsma, Jeremy Vander Hoek, Nelda Looyenga, Alanna Groen-Brunsting, Jacinda Reitsma, or Miriam Miedema. You can also email Dave, the Worship Ministry lead (dave_jaarsma@hotmail.com).

If I would like to volunteer as a Worship Leader or as a member of the Worship Team, how can I make that happen?

This would be amazing! See the members and contact above!

As a program volunteer, I'm worried that my police check might have expired. What can I do?

Our Safe Church team administers the police checks, and they have noted that a number of police checks have expired. Rick Budding will be contacting those affected. As programing resumes, please ensure full alignment with Safe Church policies, and if you have questions or new volunteers who need a police check or APART training, contact Atie Ott (atie.safechurch@gmail.com).