



CENTRAL SAANICH UNITED CHURCH

7180 East Saanich Road,
Saanichton, BC V8M 1Y4

Office telephone number: (250) 652-2713

Office Email: officecsuc@shaw.ca

Website: www.centrialsaanichunited.ca

October 27, 2022

Communicable Disease Strategy, October, 2022

Rev. Gail Miller, our Regional Minister, has advised us that the Region recommends that each congregation develop and follow a Communicable Disease strategy. This strategy is to address the changing requirements /recommendations concerning the on-going presence of Covid-19 in the community as well as other current or potential communicable diseases.

Faith communities are required to follow the Provincial Health Communicable Disease Plan. Some of the previous requirements from the Public Health of BC over the three years of the pandemic included limiting the size of groups, requiring proof of vaccination, maintaining contact tracing information, masking, social distancing, hand hygiene, self-isolating if ill, etc. We all followed these recommendations willingly because they provided the path to keeping our church a functioning part of our community.

Then the vaccinations arrived and almost all of us who can have lined up for multiple shots and boosters. We have all been very good at looking after ourselves and each other, maximizing our own efforts and doing all that we can to maintain our own health and to support those around us to stay healthy. It is joyful to know that no one in our community of faith died from Covid-19 during this pandemic.

However, as the risk from this disease has lessened, the recommendations from the government have also changed with fewer restrictions. While all required Covid-19 restrictions for faith communities in our Region were lifted in March, 2022, our church's choice and because of the age and possible health issues of some our members, we here at Central Saanich United have continued to implement some of the older restrictions. But we, too, must now change our plan. We can no longer legally ask if a person is vaccinated and we cannot impose the restrictions previously in place.

We continue to welcome all visitors and returning members. As a United Church, we should not turn people away from 'public worship'. On the advice of the Region and in line with the requirements of the Provincial government, our policy should now also reflect our desire to treat everyone equally. For example, we can either ask that everyone wear a mask or we can let everyone decide their own comfort level regarding mask wearing. Executive Council and Trustees feel that the decision to wear a mask or not is a personal decision for everyone to make based on their own comfort level. Therefore, we as a Church will not require anyone to wear a mask and that the wearing of a mask is a personal preference inside the church during worship or meetings. Seating will also now be open without restrictions.

What we will continue to do is to:

1. have hand hygiene material available at all entrances
2. ensure good ventilation throughout the buildings
3. recommend unwell people not attend worship or meetings during their period of illness
4. social distance as much as possible to meet personal comfort levels, e.g. bowing to each other during the Passing of the Peace

Our new policy will now:

1. allow each person to choose to wear a mask
2. allow everyone to select their own place to sit within the church
3. ask that those who have recently arrived at church from traveling abroad or have recently been exposed to someone who has Covid-19 to wear a mask for the first Sunday returning to church.

While some may rejoice at going back to 'the way things were' before the pandemic, others will remain vigilant concerning their own and their family's health. We as a church must treat everyone equally and respect these individual decisions. We will continue to provide a taped recording for those who do not attend the morning worship service; it is available on our website on Sunday afternoon. We sincerely hope that all still feel welcome to come and be with your church family during worship, fellowship and meetings as we continue to comply with the government regulations as adopted and recommended by our Regional administration.

Thank you all again for all of your support, understanding and compliance during the Covid-19 pandemic. As we enter this new phase, we, your Executive Council and Trustees, are still learning and adapting to the new government rules and regulations and our Region's recommendations, to keep our church a vibrant part of the Central Saanich Community.

In faith,
Lissa Zala,
Chair of Council

Steve Howell
Chair of Trustees