

Returning to In-person Worship at Hosanna

As you have probably heard, the government of Alberta has begun to allow congregations to return to in-person worship services. What you may not know about is the conditions under which this is allowed. The conditions are very strict and the experience will probably not be what you have come to expect from regular worship. Our primary concern is for the health and safety of those attending our services and the staff and volunteers providing them. A condensed list of guidelines follows this article.

We understand that many of our members are not ready to return to worship, especially under the current guidelines. We understand that and are not pressuring anyone to come, however, if you are one of those longing to return, we are now making that a possibility, although it comes with conditions. For the month of July live streaming will still be our primary focus (live streams will continue regardless of changes to the in-person conditions, so that is always an option). If you choose to come in July and are willing to abide by the conditions, know that you will be considered something of “studio audience” as the focus will still be on the live stream. If you want to come and see what it looks like to be on the other side of the screen, you can come (given you can abide by the conditions) and be a part of the experience. Please note that you will need to let us know in advance if you want to attend so we can make sure everyone can be accommodated. If there is significant demand, then you may need to rotate the weeks you wish to attend.

After we are done our “Virtual Bible Sundays” program (the Gospel according to Dr. Seuss) at the end of July, we plan to move into more of a in-person focused worship. This assumes things remain on track and there are no changes to the conditions imposed by health regulations. So, given no significant changes to these conditions (and sufficient interest), we will start to allow more people to attend in-person worship in August. As with many things related to the situation, this could also change – so stay tuned for more information.

We are also planning to offer some other alternatives this summer, for those of you who are interested in gathering under somewhat safer conditions. One of these alternatives is Wednesday evening outdoor worship. This will take place in the northeast parking lot (the recently paved one) starting July 8th at 7:30 – weather permitting. Bring your lawn chair (or we can make the folding chairs available) and come join us – socially distanced – for worship. More details will be available closer to the date. (There will still be conditions, but less than inside worship.)

Finally, we have prepared a short survey to assist us in planning for reopening (and other related questions). Please click the link below to fill out the survey (after you have read the new conditions/guidelines). Thanks for your assistance and support during these challenging times.

Here is a link to the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HPY6KKC>

In Christ,

Pastor James

COVID-19 Worship Guidelines at Hosanna
based on current Government recommendations as of June 2020:

- All attendees will be expected to follow signage about health, healthy practises, and safety measures.
- Before attending in-person worship you must **sign up to attend** by email or by calling the office to have your name added for the Sunday. This is to ensure capacity numbers are within the allotted number.
- Every worship attendee is expected to **sign-in** upon arrival in the Hosanna building. These lists will be kept in the office to ensure we can communicate with those who attended in case of a COVID-19 outbreak.
- Each worship attendee will be required to perform hand sanitization and **wear a mask** while within the church building. Staff will not wear masks while leading in worship but will ensure good hand hygiene practises are followed. We will have masks available for those who do not have a cloth one, however, you are encouraged to bring your own.
- Gathering for fellowship of any kind will be strongly discouraged within the Hosanna building. Fellowship will be encouraged, where possible, **outside** to maintain good social distancing.
- There will be no food or drink (coffee) services provided or served. Water bottles may be filled from the automatic dispenser in the hallway.
- There will be limited seating. This will be set up in advance of any in-person worship services being offered in the sanctuary to help maintain fire/safety codes and social distancing measures.
- If more attendees arrive for service than can be accommodated in the Sanctuary, they will be invited to social distance in the social room and watch the service via our livestream. If for any reason the Sanctuary and Social Room are filled to safe capacity, then people will be turned away at the door for the health of everyone.
- One-time use bulletins with all required materials will be provided to everyone for worship.
- There will be **no congregational singing**. Other special musical offerings, particularly pre-recorded ones, will continue to be sought and used as part of our worship together.
- There will be **no sharing of the peace**.
- There will be no passing of the offering plate. Practise for receiving offering will be like Lenten practise where plates are left near the entrance to the Sanctuary.
- Holy Communion will be offered on the last Sunday of the month. When in-person worship resumes, Communion will be offered in only one kind (bread only for the time being).
- These guidelines will also apply to other events like weddings and funeral services.
- These new restrictions will be communicated to the congregation before re-opening the building for worship services. Communication will include information about the possibility of outdoor worship, the effect that livestreaming now has on our worship together, and expectations regarding what to expect when returning to in-person worship during the pandemic.