Physical Space

Planning Guide

Amber Phase

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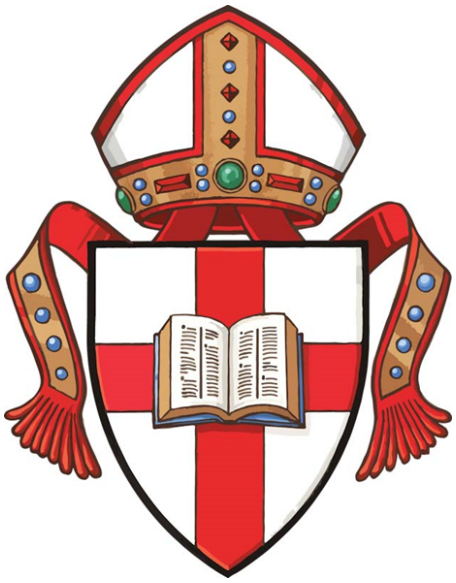


These guidelines for physical space in a Church reflect the updated guidance by government officials, healthcare professionals, and the diocesan guidelines

These guidelines are based on current requirements for groups no greater than 50 in the church at any time, including officiant, readers, musicians, greeters, etc)

Parishes should adapt only as necessary, *however, being careful not to violate social distancing, face covering, and disinfecting practices.*

Churches may **NOT** alter the number of allowed worshippers, physical distancing, face covering, or disinfecting guidelines contained here.

How to Develop Your Plan

Physical Space

General Notes:

One of the primary ways to reduce the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus is to maintain recommended social distancing (currently recommended to be 6 feet/2 metres in all directions) at all times. Prior to opening, parishes should determine and visibly mark appropriate seating, standing and waiting areas throughout the church, and also determine the most effective interior traffic circulation patterns to ensure that capacity limits are adhered to and interaction among worshippers and all others is limited.

Proper distancing must be maintained at all times--while seated, when entering and exiting the church, and when standing and/or waiting. *However, social distancing guidelines do not apply to related family members living in the same household or "Social Bubble" as defined by the province, who can be seated together*. Note: Families that are seated together may require you to make adjustments to the existing seating arrangements to accommodate the social distancing guidance

Greeters and sidespeople will be necessary to manage social distancing guidelines.

The parish should have tape marks on the floor and in pews to assist in the movement and positioning of parishioners to ensure compliance with Physical Distancing guidelines and to keep everyone safe.

This document is to be used to assist in the preparation of the parish for the reopening to the community.

It is recommended that you have a space plan developed and that the church is marked for social distancing appropriately well in advance in order to ensure the parish is ready to conduct sacraments and rituals in a safe manner and that volunteers can be trained and understand their roles and flow of parishioners.

Supplies Needed:

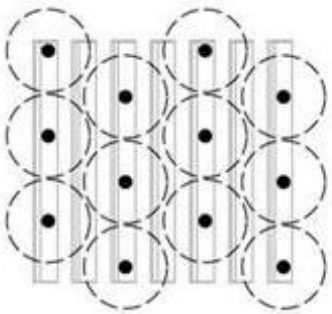
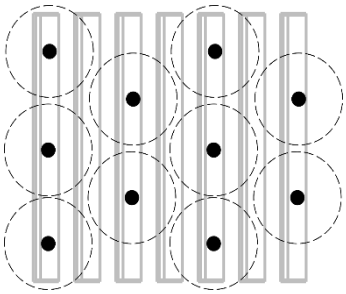
- Colored painter's tape (potentially more than one color if desired)
- Tape Measure
- Directional Signage

Marking the Pews

While each church building is unique, seating configurations will generally fit one of only a few patterns.

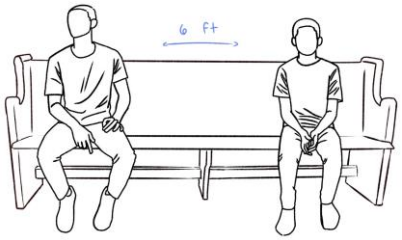
The allowable capacity is based on the number of people that can be accommodated with physical distancing OR a maximum of 30% of total seating capacity for the church building OR a maximum of 50 people (whichever is less).

- It is important to remember that 6’ must be maintained between parishioners, not only side-to-side, but front to back, diagonally, and across aisles.
- As a result, in most cases only every other row will be available for seating (vacant row in between) and seating will be offset from row-to-row.
- Typical seating layouts will be 3-2-3, 3-3-3, or 2-2-2, depending on pew length.

Sample 3-3-3 Layout	Sample 3-2-3 Layout
	

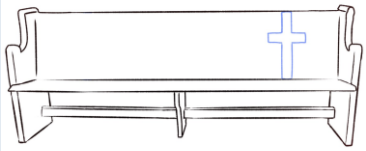
Marking the Pews

Step 1: Measure each of the pews to determine how many parishioners can safely fit in each pew.

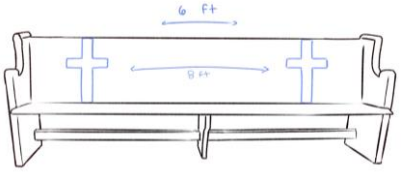


Step 2: Mark the seat backrest with a cross in painter's tape to designate where the parishioner will be seated.

Note: You need to provide an additional 2 feet of space for the parishioners to sit comfortably within the pew. Six feet of space is required per social distancing rules between parishioners, plus a foot on either side of the cross.



Step 3: Measure eight feet and place another cross with painter's tape.



Step 4: Continue this process until the pew has no additional space available.

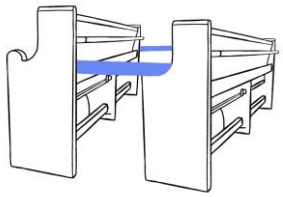
Methodology to Determine Seating Pattern: Planning It Out

- Leave the front row vacant.
- Use the next three rows to determine a sample layout:
- First determine how many seats can be utilized in a single pew
- Next determine how far apart seats must be front-to-back/diagonally to stay 6 feet apart
- Mark seats with a vertical piece of painter's tape down the front of the seat backrest, wrapping around the top of the seat, for easy identification from the front or behind
- Tape off the entrances to the unused rows
- Repeat the pattern throughout the church

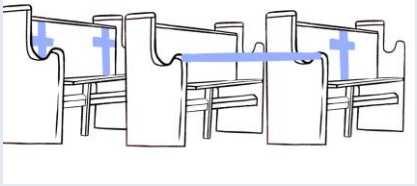
Seating Pattern

Step 1: Skip a row of pews and put a line of tape across the entrance to designate the pew as unavailable for seating.

Note: This will provide the proper social distancing in front of and behind each parishioner.



Step 2: Stagger the seating to avoid having people sitting in a single file in order to increase the social distancing.



Step 3: Be clear when seating participants that they need to sit on the cross to ensure compliance with social distancing.

Seating Families & Social Bubbles

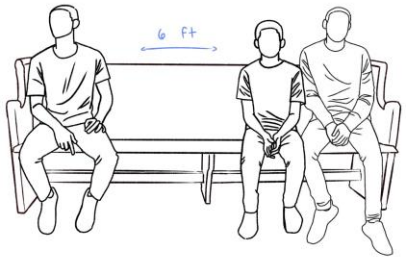
Actual seating patterns will change in response to related family or social bubble members sitting together. For instance, a family of four seated together will likely require that the neighboring seats remain vacant. Sidespeople should be aware of the impact of seating groups together to avoid delays in seating during any services.

It could be useful to designate certain sections of the church seating for families.

Families/Social Bubbles

A family or social bubble can be seated together if they have been quarantining together. Special care must be made to ensure that the family or social bubble is 6 feet from other **worshipers**

Note: A family or social bubble may require an entire pew to accommodate social distancing.



Floor Markings

Main entrance/Narthex

- Mark the center of the main entrance and continue to place markings every 6 feet until you reach the main entrance of the church
- If bathrooms or other lines/queuing are anticipated in the Narthex/entrance vestibule, appropriate spacing should be marked on the floor throughout the area

Main Aisle

- Mark with the spot at the front of the main aisle where the officiant will stand to deliver Communion or other liturgical services
- Mark the center of the aisle at the first row, ensuring a minimum of 6’ is provided between that mark and where the priest or authorized person will stand to deliver communion
- Continue to mark additional spaces, at least 6’ apart, down the center of the aisle behind the initial mark.

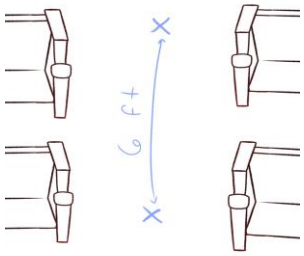
Front of the church

- Mark where the pastor will stand to deliver communion or during baptisms, weddings, or funeral services. To the extent these services will be conducted elsewhere in the church, adjust accordingly.
- Providing 6’ of distance, mark where family members or other participants will stand.

Visual Cues

Floor markings need to be made throughout the parish to provide visual cues to the parishioners. This will allow you to more easily communicate where people need to stand during entry, exit, rite, and sacrament.

Note: Predetermine where everyone would need to sit or stand for each rite or sacrament and leave those cues in place.



Additional floor markings for each service needs to be determined based on your parish setup. This includes the markings for the parishioners, sidesperson, greeters, volunteers, and priest/deacon.