

SEMC Preparing for Re-Starting amid COVID-19 (updated as of September 2, 2020)

We're using the term re-starting not resuming. Resuming leaves the impression that what we did before will be what we do going forward. Re-starting is a way to communicate a new perspective, with some new changes.

We are deeply thankful and humbled by the way in which the Lord is leading the SEMC according to it's vision and deepening our capacity to serve our community. Over the course of this COVID-19 period we have been blessed by the faithfulness of God's provision through our church family and others who have recently connected to the SEMC. The decisions that we are striving to discern are being made with a commitment to care for the long term health and well-being of all who currently call the SEMC their home, as well as for the sustaining future of our church family.

In our efforts, we are engaged in regular conversation with officials at all levels of government, our denomination and other church leaders. Based on the info we have from the Ontario Government and Lambton Health, where we are permitted to gather at 30% capacity with no singing and no children or nursery ministry:

We will not be re-starting Sunday services, during Stage 2, based on the information we have received.

- We have ordered pump bottle hand sanitizers, face masks, upholstery wipes, and disinfectant wipes, for the main entrance and the sanctuary entrances and for such a time when services re-start.
- We will solicit volunteers to help with the additional tasks required to ensure safety protocols are followed at future gatherings.
- The following 4 Phase approach is what we are considering, as possibilities, given the information we currently possess:

Phase 1

During the summer months we will look at the possibility of providing short, smaller outdoor gatherings at our church facility, in accordance with provincial and local guidelines. These will take place on Wednesday mornings, 10:15-11:00am, starting July 8. [It is maximized to 9 people, who need to pre-register by contacting the church office. \(sarniaemc@cogeco.net\)](mailto:sarniaemc@cogeco.net). Please bring your own lawn chair and beverage. We will meet under the tree on Talfourd Street.

[Update: Please note that this has met with a favourable response, and will continue throughout September. Registration is no longer required.](#)

Phase 2

If government regulations allow for 30% capacity **and** give liberty to one person singing, then we are giving consideration to and preparing for three different services in order to allow for all those who are connected to our church family, to attend an in person gathering, if they choose.

Our online services will continue on both Facebook and Youtube. By offering three different services, we are hoping to provide a “cohort” gathering, where people attend only one of the three services (unless they are serving). :

Please note that these proposals will be considered at the end of September, for implementation in October.

A. offering a Wednesday morning service **for seniors only**.

- We will need a door attendant to ensure safe distancing upon entry.
- We will need a registrant to receive names, phone numbers and declarations of being well (as per government guidelines).
- One door to be used to enter the sanctuary. The other for exit.
- We will need two ushers/guides to ensure people are seated with appropriate physical distancing.
- The main floor restroom will be the only one in use. An attendant should be available to wipe down high-touch surfaces after each use (or the available use of sanitation wipes).
- This will address the needs of our oldest generation, some of whom live alone, and benefit from social interaction.
- This also allows us to be mission minded, toward a community that is attracting more residents in their retirement years.
- There will be an offering box.
- There will not be communion, until such a time as we can offer this in a way that limits physical interaction before, during and after.
- The service time will be no more than one hour.
- People must leave the service and the building, in an orderly physically distanced manner, immediately following its conclusion.

B. KidJAM Family Edition

- We are working on a Family style service where each family unit will sit together at a table.
- This will occur once a month, the third Friday evening of each month
- Music Videos, fun Interactive activities, snack/meal, teaching, and a relevant devotion for both parents and children.
- This would be geared to KidJam aged children (Aged 3 to Grade 6).
- The above mentioned protocols (A) will also be adhered to in this aspect.

C. Sunday Morning

- For those that aren't defined by the previous two services.
- The above mentioned protocols (A) will also be adhered to in this aspect.

Phase 3

We will revisit the idea of re-starting inside, Sunday gatherings at such a time when at least 50% capacity is permissible, **including** congregational singing **and** the allowance for children and nursery ministry:

- Intergenerational ministry is a significant component of who we are, as the SEMC.
- A significant number of those who serve in various roles on a Sunday, have young children. We want to respect and serve their needs as well.
- Toward that end we are currently preparing our technological capacity to record and/or livestream from the sanctuary. This will allow us to also project the service to other spaces in the church building, if needed.
- The current physical space sets limits on seating, due to physical distancing requirements, because of the existing pews. We are looking at removing the pews, and replacing them temporarily with the existing padded orange chairs and the black plastic chairs. This would increase the overall number of people we could have in the sanctuary, and allow us to configure the seating of attendees with greater flexibility, according to the number of people in each family unit and in the physical space. The cost for this transition would be 0 dollars. This would also move us toward a remodeling of the sanctuary once the installation of the new lift is complete. The opportunity will be given to those who may desire to have a section of the pews for their home.
- The additional volunteers mentioned above, would likely still be required in this scenario, plus the addition of an attendant to wipe high touch surfaces in the downstairs bathrooms as necessary.
- There will be an offering box.
- There will not be communion, until such a time as we can offer this in a way that limits physical interaction before, during and after.
- People must leave the service and the building, in an orderly physically distanced manner, immediately following its conclusion.

Phase 4

Sunday Gatherings at full capacity.

*Recommendations from the Government of Ontario (Phase 2), June 15, 2020

** In consultation with Lambton Public Health, and Medical Officer, Dr. Ranade – June 24 & July 28, 2020.

- Dr. Ranade did remind us that in our region, there were cases of the spreading of COVID-19, in faith communities. They were not necessarily tied to singing, but to long periods of social gathering. Lambton Public Health understands the important role that places of worship play, in the emotional, mental and spiritual well-being of our community. Their strong encouragement is to continue to exercise caution in this short-term and to not interpret current restrictions as long-term solutions.

- Any violation or perceived violation and/or complaint may result in having an audit of our protocols and the possibility of a public identification of our name and location.

***Statement from the EMCC National Team, - June 26, 2020 (emcccconnected.ca)

***We have also received a checklist from our Insurance Company and have consulted with Plan to Protect in order to provide a safe environment for children and volunteers.

We are currently working toward a sound plan that is both compliant to all the guidelines we've received and keeps the safety of our community in mind.

Thanks for your on-going prayer, patience and partnership as we navigate these times.

Deve on behalf of the SEMC Governing Board.