



June 17, 2020

Dear Forward Family:

The following is meant to help us effectively and safely resume in-person worship services at Forward Baptist Church. Please read this document before you attend an in-person worship service. We have based our guidelines on those provided by [Toronto Public Health](#) on June 11, 2020 (The provincial government has yet to release any guidelines for worship centers) and as such all regulations will remain in place until superseded by further drafts to the guidelines. Changes will be communicated to the church prior to the Sunday we enact them .

As a local church in the neighbourhood for 101 years with a strong desire to be salt and light to our community (Matthew 5:13-15) and to share the gospel, it is vital for the safety of our congregation and our continued witness to the community that we take the lead in adhering to public gathering safety guidelines. To intentionally disregard suggested measures is not prudent nor is it a good witness.

As we prepare to gather again as a church, we acknowledge that every person and family is impacted by the pandemic, although often in different ways. Some of us are excited, some anxious to return, others are happy to stay at home for now, and many in our congregation have underlying health issues (or a family member whom they interact with may have health issues) making it unwise for them to attend. Whatever your situation, please do not feel pressured into returning. If you are in the vulnerable group or have underlying health issues please strongly consider not returning at this time. **As a church, we are committed to continuing to minister online and in person to our congregation until it is safe for all to return to in person meetings.** We are developing policies and procedures to mitigate risk but please understand that we will never be able to eliminate all risks associated with gathering together at this time.

Foundational principles as we make decisions on gathering together:

- God's Word calls us to maintain the unity He has given us in Christ (Ephesians 4:1-6, Philippians 2:3, Romans 14:19, 1 Peter 3:8). We are in the midst of uncharted territory and we need to remember to be gracious, humble and loving to each other. How and when we start meeting together again as a local body can create division within the church so let us uphold our church in prayer. Pray for unity and act humbly toward one another so that Christ can be glorified in our church.
- As Christians we are called by God to honour and obey our governmental leaders, so we must do our utmost to abide by the letter and spirit of the laws and regulations they provide us. "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no



authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Romans 13:1).

- The Bible calls us to follow the example of Christ: not looking out for our own rights but considering others more important than ourselves, particularly those in our congregation who are more vulnerable. Additionally, we do not want to risk bringing reproach upon the gospel by implementing lax measures that may lead to an outbreak in our congregation or the surrounding community. Therefore, it is wise to implement all mandatory measures from the government and to seriously consider implementing all recommended safety measures. “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18).
- Places of worship enjoy a privilege that has not been granted to other organizations or social settings, so we want to prove to our neighbours and our city that we will accept this privilege with the utmost seriousness. For that reason, it is wise to emphasize practices that pertain not only to the inside of the building, but also the outside. “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Worshipping safely together:

The remainder of this document contains specific guidelines that pertain to seating capacity, preparation to attend church, arrival, worship, and departure.

Seating capacity:

- The government regulations permit us to use up to 30% of the usual seating capacity of our facility. Our sanctuary is able to seat 600 people. This allows us to have 180 people in our service, so we will have plenty of extra room. This is a blessing! We have marked off designated seats throughout our sanctuary. In total, we have 55 designated areas for “households” to sit together. Pews not being used will be taped off.

Preparation to attend church:

- Before you leave your home, please consider whether anyone in your household is experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat). If one of you is showing such symptoms, if you have traveled internationally in the past 14 days, or if you have had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days, please remain home as you will not be permitted to enter the building. If you are uncertain whether you should be self-monitoring or self-isolating, please complete a [self-assessment](#).
- Ensure you bring a mask or face shield for each member of your household (over the age of 2). If you do not have one, we will provide you with a disposable mask. Here is a [video](#) on how to properly wear a face mask.



- There will be no food or beverages served before or after the worship service, as per government recommendations. If you anticipate needing water, please bring your own.

Arriving at church:

- As you approach the church property or leave your car to proceed to the main entrance, ensure you remain at least six feet away from people of any other household.
- All family members (except children under the age of 2) must be wearing a mask or face shield when they approach the church.
- We ask that you use the hand sanitizer when you arrive. Do not wear gloves into the church that have been used, including on the commute to church.
- Covid Screening - you will be asked the following questions:
 - (1) Are you experiencing any of these common symptoms of COVID-19: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat?
 - (2) Have you traveled internationally in the past 14 days?
 - (3) Have you had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days?

(If the answer to any of these is “yes” you will not be permitted to enter.)

- Attendance will be taken as part of the screening. Attendance information will be kept confidential unless it is later determined that an infectious person attended a service. In that case, the information will be made available to Toronto Public Health for purposes of contact tracing and the church will also notify all those who attended that service and advise them of the recommendations of Toronto Public Health.
- Once you have entered the building, you will be expected to sanitize your hands and then to proceed immediately to your seat. Your seat will be assigned to you by an usher.
- Please remain in your seat for the duration of the service. Feel free to talk with those you are able to while remaining in your seat and keeping 6 feet of physical distance in place.
- Seats will be arranged in "household clusters" with at least 6 feet between clusters.
- People will be seated to the front of the Sanctuary first, then towards the back. This will ensure 6 feet of physical distancing. Please be prepared not to sit in your “usual seats.”
- Hand sanitizer will be available at the church and sanctuary entrances. Young children should only use hand sanitizer with adult supervision.

During the service:

- Services will be approximately one hour in length. You are welcome to bring resources for your kids to enjoy during the service as we will not have any nursery or children's ministry available during the service.
- Toronto Public Health strongly recommends that since “respiratory droplets and aerosols generated during singing ... may travel further than two metres/six feet” we do



not sing corporately. For that reason, we will not currently sing as a congregation. However, we may have a soloist or worship team who follows the recommended practice of remaining at least 4 metres from congregants.

- All pastors, service leaders, and worship leaders will maintain full social distancing during all elements of the service. Because infected people can transmit the virus over greater distances through their saliva or respiratory droplets while shouting or speaking loudly, there will be additional space between the front platform and congregants.
- While we continue to recommend giving by e-transfer to donation@forwardbaptist.com or by completing the pre-authorized giving form, cash and cheque donations can be left in one of the 2 boxes at the exits to the sanctuary.
- Children must remain with their parents at all times and must not wander within the sanctuary. If children become restless, parents are asked to take them outdoors as the rest of the church building will not be available.
- Washrooms are available but we do encourage everyone to use the washroom before arriving at the church. (Additional washroom info below.)

Departure:

- After the service is finished please remain in your seats until you are dismissed. We will dismiss from the back of the sanctuary first. As of right now you will be asked to dismiss from the building and not spend time hanging around. You will be dismissed by section and asked to proceed outdoors
- As you leave the church property ensure you remain at least six feet away from people of any other household
- You must continue to wear your mask or face shield as you exit and until you return to your vehicle or start on your way home by walking/TTC.

Additional information:

Elevator:

- The elevator will be available for anyone that needs it. Buttons will be wiped between each use. We will have a welcome team member at the Christian Education Building entrance to assist.

Restrooms:

- We encourage all people to go to the bathroom before attending church.
- We will have the accessible restroom, Ladies restroom by the Library and the Men's and Women's restroom on the lower level by the gym available only. All other bathrooms will be closed.



- Bathroom capacity will be limited to 1 person at a time. Bathrooms will be cleaned after every use.

Cleaning:

- Surfaces that are frequently touched (e.g. doors, toilet handles, faucets, paper towel dispensers) will be cleaned before, during, and after the service by our ushers/cleaning team.
- After each service, all designated seating areas will be cleaned with disinfectant.

Church building:

- Access to the rest of the church building will be restricted to ministry staff and custodians only. We have a very large facility and it will help us greatly if you stay in designated areas.

Revision Information

Initial document distribution: June 17, 2020