



Oxford • Elgin • St. Thomas

Elgin St. Thomas Site

Administrative Office
1230 Talbot Street
St. Thomas, ON
N5P 1G9

Woodstock Site

410 Buller Street
Woodstock, ON
N4S 4N2



July 24, 2020

From the Office of Dr. Joyce Lock, Medical Officer of Health, Southwestern Public Health

Dear Faith Leader,

We have seen a recent increase in cases of COVID-19 infection within the region served by Southwestern Public Health (Oxford County, Elgin County and the City of St. Thomas). Large gatherings continue to be a significant source of COVID-19 infection in our region, and that includes church celebrations.

Common scenarios within a church setting are also high-risk for spreading infection. These include:

1. Sitting or standing close to one another or to the ministry personnel or choir.
2. Greeting one another by shaking hands, embracing, or passing the blessing.
3. Not wearing a face covering because of perceived interference with participation in the service or prayer.
4. Not wearing a face covering when singing/chanting which can spread droplets containing the virus as far as 4 feet.

We share a common goal of ensuring the health and wellness of everyone in our community. Your members look to you for guidance and leadership – we trust they will do so in matters related to COVID-19 as well. Please work with your community, parishioners, and colleagues to develop strategies that will reduce the risks of COVID-19 infection. It is critical we contain this spread.

We understand that faith is sustaining many of us in these challenging times and believe there are ways to practice faith while staying well and protecting our friends and neighbours. My sincere thanks for your help in this matter.

Dr. Joyce Lock
Medical Officer of Health
Southwestern Public Health
1-800-922-0096, ext.1255
jjlock@swpublichealth.ca

Resource: [COVID-19 Guidance for Places of Worship](#)