

Covid Protocol Development Team 2021 Annual Report

The Covid Development Team held its first meeting in March 2019, under the leadership of Laurie Mueller. Council authorized its formation because of the very real and ongoing dangers posed by Covid 19. Members were Laurie Mueller, who retired from the team in September 2021, Rick Nuttall who sadly passed away, Bill Walker, Sue Christensen, Nancy Walker, Rev. Bill Cantelon, John Anderson, Arlene Vickery and Atholl Malcolm, who assumed the chair in October 2021. More recently, Joanne Thomas and Jane Shumka have joined the team. The team presently includes one retired physician, a retired critical care nurse and a retired clinical psychologist.

As well as having related professional qualifications, the team's members represent key segments of the church leadership: both ministers, the chair of council, the chairs of Stewardship and Ministry and Personnel, a member of the Property Committee and the Caring Committee, and our church administrator. All to say, the team is well qualified for the task of keeping everyone as safe and healthy as possible, remembering that we have in our midst (1) elderly and therefore vulnerable congregation members, and (2) young children who are not vaccinated.

Simply put, the purpose of the team is to recommend procedures and protocols to keep the congregation and the church staff as safe as possible. To accomplish this the team meets weekly, (about 50 times last year). At the meetings the team reviews the latest published medical data from a variety of credible sources, reviews any United Church of Canada Pacific Mountain Region protocols for worship, addresses issues brought forward from the congregation or from staff, reviews safety plans from renters and church user groups, anticipates the implications of this data on our church and our staff, and, if necessary, recommends actions that should be considered by council.

There are several components of the church that are specific recipients for our findings, but first and foremost this team acts in an advisory capacity only, and any administrative safety restrictions are provided to council for approval. Because time is often critical, advice is typically approved by a telephone survey or a quick Zoom meeting. Jane in the office then becomes our center of communication. She helps to distribute information to the congregation and to user groups and also answers many telephone and email inquiries each week

The Covid team also reviews requests from those who wish to rent the church. Renters are responsible for obeying provincial guidelines, but they are also required to submit a safety plan for approval by our team. Further, the team provides protocol advice to the M&P Committee because that committee, in turn, is responsible for the wellbeing of staff. And the team advises the custodian of the cleaning requirements for the church under Covid conditions.

We are aware that there can be frustration when we are not able to enjoy in-person worship and have to distance and wear masks. Even our musicians wear masks while singing. We should bear in mind that when we feel frustrated that very few United Churches in B.C. are providing in-person services due to the Omicron wave. However, also bear in mind that we will recommend a return to in-person Worship as soon as safely possible. Thank you to our Worship Team for their flexibility and adaptability. Thank you to the Livestreaming Team, and prior to that the Recording Team, for their work in providing an online presence in which we can all share worship. Thank you to the Fellowship Team for our Zoom Sunday hour. Thank you, the congregation, for your patience, your endurance, and support as we all seek to keep each other as safe as possible during this pandemic.

Respectfully submitted
Atholl Malcolm, Chair