**General Protocols for Bethel Mennonite Church Programming Involving Children**

**Responding to the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic**

*Last Updated September 9, 2021*

The following protocols assume that all of the current Bethel building use protocols are also followed by all groups at Bethel which involve children, and do not replace those protocols but serve as a supplement to them. Specific programs may have their own additional protocols.

We seek to ground all of our programming in love for one another and for our neighbours, and affirm that this means following the best public health advice provided by the province of Manitoba at all times.

**Registration for Programs:**

* Wherever possible, children/families will pre-register for programs.
* In cases where children are being dropped off for programs, parents will ensure that Bethel staff or volunteers are able to contact a parent or alternate contact at all times in the event that a child becomes ill and needs to be sent home early.
* Protocols governing Bethel building use, as well as protocols specific to children’s programming, will be available to parents and families.
* When nametags are used, single use adhesive nametags will be used in place of reusable nametags.

**Pre-Screening of Staff, Volunteers, and Children:**

* We are requesting that all staff and volunteers working in programs with children be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
* Staff, volunteers and children should not attend any programs at Bethel if they:
	+ are sick or are experiencing symptoms suggestive of COVID-19
	+ are a close contact to someone with COVID-19 and have been directed to self-isolate
	+ have travelled in the past 14 days and are required to self-isolate
* Any child who becomes ill while in attendance at the church will be isolated in a designated room and parents will immediately be contacted to request that they come and pick up the child. A volunteer will supervise the child until the parent arrives. Volunteers or staff who become ill while at the church will be asked to go home immediately, and will be isolated if they cannot immediately leave (ie. need to wait for a ride or bus).
* Anyone with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 should be tested, and if negative can return to programs 24 hours after symptoms resolve. If individuals choose not to be tested, they should isolate for 10 days from symptom onset, and may return if symptoms have resolved at that time.

**Handwashing & Use of Alcohol-Based Sanitizer:**

* Upon arrival, all staff, volunteers, and children will be directed to wash their hands or use provided hand sanitizer.
* Handwashing or use of hand sanitizer will occur again when changing activities, and before eating or drinking.

**Physical Distancing:**

* Regular reminders will be provided, at the beginning of the program and throughout as necessary, of the need to maintain physical distancing from other children not from the same household, as well as from staff or volunteers.
* Registration for certain programs or events may be limited in order to ensure that physical distancing can be maintained.
* Wherever possible, children from the same school cohorts and children from the same household will be grouped together.
* Hula hoops, cones, and other objects will be used to space children out during activities.
* As much as possible, outdoor play is encouraged, especially during activities involving movement.
* In places where lines are likely to form, floor or outdoor ground markings will be used to indicate required distancing.
* Staff and volunteers will wear non-medical masks during programs. Children ages 5 and up will also be required to wear non-medical masks during programs. (Preschool children, infants, and others who would not be able to remove a mask independently should not be asked to wear a mask.)
* Specific washrooms will be designated for the program or event, depending on the space being used for that program as well as any other spaces in use during that time.

**Programming:**

* Activities will be limited to those that allow children and volunteers to remain two meters apart (crafts, stories or Bible lessons, non-contact games, etc).
* Staff and volunteers will ensure that all equipment is appropriately disinfected between each use, and not shared.
* Craft materials will be prepackaged into individual kits. If markers or crayons are required, they will be individual packaged to be returned at the end of the activity and sanitized before they are used again.
	+ Craft and activity kits will be prepared at least 4 days in advance, in an effort to limit any possibility of viral transmission via these objects.
* Any time supplies are handed out, volunteers must sanitize their hands immediately prior to touching supplies or equipment.
* Any toys used by specific groups, or in church spaces such as the nursery, will be limited to those toys which are easily cleaned and sanitized; toys which are more difficult to clean will be removed for the time being (eg. stuffed toys). A dirty toy bin will be made available, and any toys which have been used will be placed in that bin after a child has played with that toy. Toys should only be used by one child/children from the same household.
	+ Appropriate signage will be posted in the nursery with instructions about placing dirty toys in the bins for cleaning.

**Food and Drinks:**

* All snacks served will be individually pre-packaged. Staff or volunteers helping to serve snacks will be diligent about hand hygiene.
* Children will be asked to bring their own water bottle labelled with their name. Single use bottles of water will be available for any children who forget their water bottle, and will be labelled with the child’s name as it is provided.

**Cleaning and Sanitizing:**

* After each program, all frequently touched surfaces, toys, and other items used will be cleaned according to protocols.
* When possible, surfaces and items should first be cleaned with warm water and detergent. Using friction to wash helps remove most germs underneath the dirt, as well as the dirt itself.
* Rinse area or item well, and dry.
* After the item has been cleaned, use solution of 5 ml bleach to 500 ml water for sanitizing, **must** be mixed fresh daily be effective. Store away from heat or light & away from children.
	+ Can be used for tables, countertops, diapering areas, door knobs, toys, infant books, puzzles, toilets or potties, telephone.
* Adequate time should be left between different user groups in a particular space to allow for cleaning to take place.