



The Anglican Church of Canada

Diocese of Athabasca

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From the Bishop:
The Right Reverend David Greenwood

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To the Beloved of Christ in the Diocese of Athabasca

Dear People of Christ:

The province of Alberta has announced that, as of July 1st, it is relaxing all covid-related health restrictions within the boundary of the province. What does this mean for us as the body of Christ, and for our worship together?

Right after my consecration, and until Christmas last year, I asked all of us within the diocese to say Psalm 91 on a daily basis. Why did I do this? I think it's important to remind ourselves, especially when times are uncertain and sickness is being highlighted, that we live in the shelter of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the protective shadow of our Heavenly Father. We can trust God, the one who created us and allowed us to sacrifice Him for ourselves. He wants nothing more than an ongoing, loving relationship with us, one that we can celebrate in. If you haven't read Psalm 91 in a while, I encourage you to meditate on it, especially in light of the past year.

This does not mean that we don't get sick, nor that we don't die, nor that we shouldn't protect and care for others – though we strive to live in God's state of shalom (health, wholeness, completeness, peace), its final unveiling is not with us yet. So, though we do not fear death, neither do we encourage it.

I suggest that we take a measured approach, emphasizing health and care for each other, as the province opens up its restrictions. Let us love each other as God loves us. What does this mean? In general terms:

- A. Pray! Talk to our loving heavenly Father and our Saviour Christ about your health, your neighbour's health, the health of your parish, community, etc.
- B. Take care of your health (eating right, exercising, etc).



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- C. Insist on good hygiene for yourself, including thorough washing of hands: I have taken to washing until I have finished reciting the Lord's Prayer to myself, and recommend it as a good practice.
- D. Cough into your sleeve instead of your hands.
- E. If you do get sick, staying as isolated as you can is good advice generally (unless of course you need to see a doctor or go to the hospital). So, take care of your health, and stay informed through reliable sources (for example, Health Canada, or Alberta Health Services (<http://www.ahs.ca/>), (<https://www.alberta.ca/enhanced-public-health-measures.aspx>)). The advice specific to COVID-19 is to self-isolate for 14 days to make sure you do not have the disease. In Alberta, call 811 if you have any suspicions and get proper advice.
- F. Parishioners who have compromised immune systems or are at a greater risk during this outbreak may choose to self-isolate themselves. Reach out to those in need and strive to get them the help they need. Stay in touch with them. This is always our Gospel mandate, and part of living in Shalom.
- G. Parishes must have explicit permission from the Bishop to re-open following an imposed suspension of in-person services.

Regarding in-person worship, please maintain your own safety and help protect those around you.

1. The latest provincial health guidelines give us a minimum for what we should do. If you have any questions, please confer with 811 regarding the specifics of what you intend, and then give the Bishop a shout.
2. All parishioners and clergy thoroughly wash their hands before attending worship.
3. Have masks available for people who prefer to wear one, and keep your building (including bathrooms) clean and hygienic.
4. When entering or leaving worship, instead of shaking hands you can greet each other verbally or with a slight bow.
5. Instead of passing the plate during the Offertory, place your tithes and offerings into a plate at the entrance, which can then be brought up to the Altar.
6. During the peace, instead of shaking hands you can wave, smile, or bow. Please do, however, remember to pass the peace verbally! You are in effect praying for Christ's shalom to be part of the life of the recipient.
7. Use hand sanitizer. Remember however, while these are excellent for bacteria, they do not get rid of all viruses – washing of hands is still required. Have hand sanitizer available to people as they come up for Communion as well as at the entrance and exits.
8. Regarding receiving wine as part of holy communion, be careful and prayerful – some parishes may decide to stay with the distribution of bread only for the time being, for example not sharing the common cup until people with two vaccinations (either within the parish if they're willing to share that information with each other, or the province-wide stat), have reached 70% of the population, or distributing only bread if there is a spate of illness going through the community.
9. If you touch another person's hands (as part of communion or otherwise), even incidentally, stop and re-sanitize before continuing.



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10. Note that palladium, platinum, copper, gold and silver have been shown to demonstrate effective antimicrobial properties, and are therefore good choices for the chalice. Wipe and revolve the chalice after each person has received the wine. Individuals can decide for themselves whether to use the common cup; it is more than acceptable to receive in 'one kind' (i.e.: bread) only, or to abstain altogether and receive a blessing. Ensure the next person is always having their portion of the cup wiped with a clean portion of the purificator, or get a new purificator to wipe with.
11. Intinction (dipping the bread into the wine) is not permitted. Studies have shown this allows bacteria into the cup from the hands.
12. Use only fortified altar wine, of at least 18% alcohol (for our Ecumenical Ministry sites, please confer with your respective authority (Lutheran or United) for their guidance regarding grape juice – individual cups may be used (note this is for Ecumenical sites only)).
13. Disinfect all door knobs, altar rails, pews and toys after each service. To disinfect plush toys, they must be laundered in a washing machine with hot water, and dried in a clothes dryer on a hot cycle – so you may just wish to remove them.
14. Singing is allowed. Please be sensitive to distancing and make sure you are in good health.

Take all necessary precautions and be mindful of your own health and that of others. If you feel ill, even on a Sunday morning, give notice to others and stay home. If you are responsible for leading the service in some way, pass your preparation (sermon, reading, or prayers) to someone who is not ill. If the clergy is ill then Morning Prayer is always an option. Those who are sick should call their doctor or 811 and follow their advice.

Coffee times and social gatherings are now permitted (indoors and out). As mentioned above, have masks available for people who prefer to wear one, and keep your building (including bathrooms) clean and hygienic. Be sensitive to people who wish to maintain social distancing or have specific hygienic precautions (such as masking and frequent sterilizing).

Please advise outside groups who may use your building to use all necessary and appropriate precautions with their members. Be aware that if an outside group suffers a mishap while using one of our buildings, we can be held jointly liable for whatever has happened if we have not shared our practices and have them posted prominently.

Let us not go into the future in fear, but rather in gratitude that indeed the good Lord has our names inscribed on the palms of His hands, and His love for us is overwhelming.

May you be blessed in Christ;



David Greenwood, Bishop