

19 July 2021

To Wardens and Clergy

The COVID-19 Taskforce of the Diocese of Calgary wishes to extend its appreciation for the thoughtful and conscientious decisions you have made over the past couple of weeks as you enact plans for returning to in-person worship in your parishes. Overall, daily counts have remained low since Stage 3 of reopening on July 1, and this is encouraging.

At this point, while all restrictions have been lifted from a provincial standpoint, the COVID-19 Taskforce continues to encourage vigilance in the monitoring of local numbers as you make decisions about further reducing or eliminating restrictions and requirements that you deemed appropriate as you returned to in-person worship within your parish. While masking and distancing are not required, you may want to make provision for those who would be more comfortable maintaining these practices. Indoor social gatherings such as coffee hours are permissible, but people may not yet feel comfortable participating. You might consider ways to give people permission to gracefully exclude themselves from these kinds of gatherings.

Above all, we encourage you to keep an eye on people in your parishes as we return "normal," if indeed that is what is happening. Pandemics typically run for two years and then are followed by two more years of adjusting and readjusting to life without pandemic. These second two years can have a serious impact on people's mental, emotional, spiritual, and social health. This means that the crisis is likely to continue for some time yet, just in a different form. We need to be aware of the potential for this and be prepared to respond when we see it happening. You might consider providing learning opportunities within your parishes dealing with topics such as resilience and psychological first aid. Of course, being the Church, courses on spiritual first aid utilizing the wealth of spiritual practices we have available to us would be very appropriate as well.

We on the taskforce wish you well as you continue to make decisions and enact plans that are appropriate in your local contexts. May God bless you in this important work.

Archdeacon Noel Wygiera, Chair  
Diocese of Calgary COVID-19 Taskforce