

The Anglican Church of Canada
Diocese of Athabasca
The Anglican Centre

From the Bishop:
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Dear Clergy and Parish Leaders in Athabasca:

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord. Please post this letter in all your parish church worship centres. In light of the recent increase in covid-19 numbers (currently at 1400 to 1700 per day in Alberta), putting us in line with a most serious infection curve projection (<https://bccovid-19group.ca/post/alberta-4th-wave/>), understanding that our hospital ICU's are at 95% capacity currently and **not** wishing to re-suspend in-person worship services, I consulted with Archbishop Gregory of Calgary, Bishop-Elect Stephen of Edmonton, and my Medical Advisory Committee. I have now decided we need to return to more stringent safety behaviours when gathering together, as we were doing previously. This will apply to regularly scheduled services as well as infrequent ones (memorials, funerals, etc.), as is effective as of now.

This means:

- 1.) All parishioners and clergy thoroughly wash their hands before attending worship. The guidance for handwashing is for at least 20 seconds: saying the Lord's Prayer once while washing is about the right length of time.
- 2.) All participants are to wear masks upon entry, for the duration they are in the building, and until they leave. These masks are to cover the chin, mouth, and nose.
- 3.) All participants are to be socially distanced (2 metres) from people not in their cohort. Pews or chairs should be marked to facilitate this. Traffic patterns in and out should be designed to facilitate this.
- 4.) 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. Do not pass the plate through the congregation.
- 5.) During the peace, instead of shaking hands or physical contact, wave, smile, or bow. Please remember to pass the peace verbally! You are in effect praying for Christ's shalom to be part of the life of the recipient.

- 6.) When entering or leaving worship, greet each other verbally instead of shaking hands.
- 7.) Use hand sanitizer. As well as washing with soap and water before attending church, please have hand sanitizer available for approaching and leaving communion, as well as using it at communion in conjunction with the lavabo washing (and during communion if there is any inadvertent touching of hands). If there are allergies or medical reasons why a communicant cannot be exposed to sanitizer, thoroughly washing with soap and water before distributing to that specific congregant will suffice.
- 8.) During communion, the presider will take bread, and may optionally take wine as well. The wine will not be shared with others, but bread only. The presider shall re-sanitize his or her hands before distributing communion and if at any time their hands contact that of a parishioner. They may also put on gloves, use tongs, or a patten with an attached handle. Note that if you use these items, they cannot touch the hands of the communicant. Each wafer shall be individually dropped into the hands of the communicant without touching them. Other than when ingesting the communion, all participants shall be masked. When ingesting, people shall be socially distanced as they must briefly adjust their mask to do this.
- 9.) As discussed in previous letters, the preferred option of receiving Holy Eucharist is as a gathered community. The second option is as Reserved Sacrament. The third option, for those who are unable to physically receive (in this case, participants who are having communion virtually and do not have reserved sacrament at hand, or those who did not feel safe approaching the altar rail so stayed in their seats), the presider may say the following prayers before communion is completed, or prayer(s) of like intent:

“For those who are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: reflecting that you are aware that Christ died for you and does eagerly forgive you your sins when you earnestly confess them and, remembering how through faith in His death and resurrection you have obtained entrance into His everlasting kingdom; may our Lord God, perfect in love, mercy and righteousness, through the power of His incarnation, death, and resurrection, fill you with His presence. May you have true communion with Him, so you may love Him with all your being, love your neighbor as you love yourself, and may you never be separated from Him. In the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.”

“For those who are not baptized: May the blessing of God Almighty, Father Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always. May you come to know true communion with Him, in His death and resurrection, for the Kingdom of God has come near to you. Amen.”

- 8.) 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 for grape juice (note this is for ecumenical sites only).
- 9.) Disinfect all doorknobs, 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 for the time being.

- 10.) Any gatherings within the building before or after worship must be socially distanced with no open food being shared while in the building (all food must be individually wrapped).

Keep track of all attendees so that you may follow up with them in case of an actual covid case.

If, somehow, covid is experienced at your in-door worship gathering:

- 1.) Immediately quarantine the church building for two weeks. Quarantine yourselves as well. Notify your parishioners what has happened and recommend to those who attended that they do the same.
- 2.) If applicable (ie: if the rules change again to facilitate this), ensure Alberta Health Services (AHS) is notified. Share with them the attendance list from the service in question, and the practices which had been put in place (distancing, masks, etc.).
- 3.) Notify me.
- 4.) Clean all surfaces before resuming (as per approved guideline), with a basic bleach mixture or cleaning product. If there are allergies or problems with bleach, isopropyl alcohol or hydrogen peroxide may be used. Please be careful with all these products and follow all guidelines for their usage.
- 5.) Follow all AHS communications given specifically to you.
- 6.) Resume services after documentation from me giving you explicit approval to do so.

This is not a closing of in-person worship services, but intended to forestall that. If things get worse, we may have to close in-person worship services in a quick order.

Please continue to reach out to those in need – you are part of the family of Christ, and in the name of Christ, you make a difference.

Take all necessary precautions and be mindful of your own health. 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.

Shalom (peace, health, wholeness) be with you in the name of Christ.

Let us hold each other up in prayer;



David Greenwood, Bishop