



#180 1209 59 Ave SE
Calgary, AB T2H 2P6
Tel: 403 243 3673

September 2, 2021

To the people of the Anglican Diocese of Calgary

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

September is normally a time of excitement and anticipation as we welcome people back after quiet summers. We restart our regular worship patterns and start new programs. We look forward to being in each others' company as our communities reassemble. However, we are all aware that this year, like last year, is not a normal year, and once again September is looking like it will be different than what we normally look forward to. We want to encourage you to persevere and continue running the race that is set before you. Strive to excel in the things that you can do rather than dwelling on the things that you cannot do. Remember that God is not only with us in the good times but promises to walk with us and go before us in the difficult times as well. The challenges that we face can be opportunities to draw closer to God, to abide with him as he abides with us, even in the darkest of valleys.

The fourth wave of COVID is now upon us. Daily case numbers are rising rapidly and current modelling projects that Alberta could see its highest levels to date by mid-month. Hospitalizations are soon likely to surpass levels that we saw in previous waves. The pandemic is not under control.

As the Church, we are called to have particular concern for the most vulnerable among us. This has been the guiding principle of the COVID-19 Taskforce as it has had to make difficult decisions over the past year and a half. It continues to be the guiding principle as we anticipate having to make more difficult decisions in coming months.

At this point, the most vulnerable are unvaccinated people, and those who received early vaccinations and are experiencing declining immunity. Unvaccinated persons include children under 12 years of age, people who cannot be vaccinated because of health issues, and people who have chosen not to be vaccinated. While vaccines do not fully prevent people from becoming infected or being contagious, they do greatly reduce the risk of serious illness and the need for hospitalization. Over the summer in Alberta, 88% of COVID-19 ICU patients were unvaccinated. Fully vaccinated persons made up less than 4% of ICU patients.

When offering in-person worship and other activities, we need to do all in our power to protect the most vulnerable, not only in our church communities, but also in the wider communities that we serve. Required measures are not intended to protect the community from the unvaccinated but rather to protect the vulnerable, including the unvaccinated, who are now at a much greater risk of illness leading to hospitalization. Please remember that the measures we take not only reduce the risk of COVID infection but also other infections that can cause serious illness that could require hospitalization. Any efforts we make to keep people out of hospital benefit us all in the long run.

For the time being, parishes that are currently offering in-person worship may continue doing so. However, all parishes should be prepared to offer alternatives to in-person services as the requirement to suspend services is a very real possibility that will come with short notice. This could happen as early as next week. In the meantime, we will be returning to requirements similar to last Fall's reopening plans.

Requirements now include the mandatory use of masks, appropriate distancing between individuals and cohorts, and hand washing/sanitizing. Sanitizing pews and other furniture is only necessary when multiple services will be offered in

short succession. Maximum participant numbers are to be limited to the number of cohorts that can assemble with appropriate distancing in buildings with adequate ventilation and air exchange. In buildings where ventilation is poor, this maximum should be decreased accordingly. Pre-registration for services should be implemented as soon as possible to assist with controlling numbers of attendees and for providing contact tracing information. Social functions, including coffee hours, both indoor and outdoor, are now suspended.

The COVID-19 Taskforce will meet again next week and will provide its next update at that time.

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and guide you in the days ahead.

Archbishop Greg & the COVID Taskforce