

Updated COVID-19 Guidelines

November 12, 2021

Effective November 22, 2021

We are now approaching two years of the struggle with the COVID-19 Pandemic in our diocese. Largely due to the success of the vaccination program, we have seen new infection rates, hospitalisations and deaths remain at a much lower level than at similar points during the pandemic. Some areas of our diocese have experienced increases in the number of cases, other areas remain stable.

However, vaccination cannot be the sole means of containing the spread of the virus: hand and respiratory hygiene, social distancing, face-coverings, and good ventilation have been and continue to be important factors in lessening the spread of the disease. Whether mandatory or not, they are still important public health mitigations and continue to help minimise risk in public worship and other church activities.

As the church, we now need to move forward as legal restrictions ease. Each church will now have great flexibility in deciding how best to manage the risk to ourselves and others, while being aware that we are many members within one body. We are called to be responsible to one another and for one another, respecting the more vulnerable.

There are elements of the Provincial and local Health Unit regulations that create some perceived inconsistencies. For example, you may remove masks while seated and eating at a social function, but not in church while worshipping. These can create some questions and frustration; however, we must comply with laws and regulations.

The individual circumstances in each parish will inform local decision-making and the aim of this guidance is to provide a framework and help define where there are choices. In every situation there is likely to be a range of feeling about risk that will need to be accommodated by our churches in a way appropriate to each of them.

It is also clear that online and hybrid worship services have opened new opportunities. Each church has responded uniquely to the opportunity and challenges of being online, developing both differing technical, platform and liturgical practice to meet their circumstances. We encourage online worship continuing as we move forward.

The Province of Ontario has provided some significant changes on COVID regulations, creating an opportunity for churches to remove limits on capacity during church services. Based on the new regulations, churches who wish to lift some of these restrictions will be required to restrict attendance to those who show proof of double vaccination (or a valid medical exemption) and personal ID. People who are not eligible for vaccination (for now, children under 12 years) are

not affected by this change. The requirements for those under the age of 12 who participate in the leadership of worship remain in place (servers, choristers, etc.). Please note that the restrictions on congregational singing will affect capacity.

The new guidelines create new options for churches as of **MONDAY NOVEMBER 22 (for Advent I)**:

These options are specific to activities (e.g., worship, social, retail, etc.) not to the facility or organization. You may select a different Option for different activities (e.g., early service, late service, events, etc.). However, it is critical to ensure clear communication for anyone in your congregation or community that may attend so expectations and requirements to enter are clear.

“Open” Option — no proof of vaccination required to attend worship

If a church (the Wardens and Incumbent) decides not to require proof of vaccination, you must continue to operate with the existing diocesan policy/protocols - capacity limits based on physical distancing, maintaining distancing between households, masking, etc. Worship leaders, Wardens, etc. must continue to follow the diocesan Vaccination Policy. No Food and Drink can be served at coffee hour and the event is subject to a limit of 25 people.

“Restricted Option” — proof of double vaccination required

If a church decides to require that all attending (over the age of 12) provide proof of vaccination, then physical distancing and the associated capacity limits are no longer required and limits on the number who can attend social events are also lifted. See below for additional restrictions if Congregational Singing is permitted. Food and drink can be served at coffee hour, subject to a limit of 25 people and with other restrictions. Masks are still required.

For many churches, the Restricted Option is attractive as it lifts restrictions on capacity and seating. However, we strongly urge you to continue to exercise caution and allow for safety. For instance, we recommend you maintain physical distancing whenever possible. Similarly, if you decide to serve refreshments at social times, all those present must continue to wear masks. Like restaurants, masks can only be removed when seated and eating. People may not move around the room while unmasked.

Your decision on whether or not to limit in-person services to people with proof of vaccination will have to balance risks to people’s physical health with pastoral and spiritual needs. This is not a small decision, given it restricts individual’s access to worship, sacrament, and social activities no matter which option is chosen. In most churches, there will be a variety of perspectives and feelings. Care should be taken to ensure the choice made by the Incumbent and Wardens reflects the broader congregation and not just the loudest voices.

Perhaps, for example, if you have more than one service, you could have one that requires proof of vaccination, and another that sticks with capacity limits and no checks for proof of vaccination. Similarly, not all congregations within a multi-point or area ministry need to have the same policy. Clergy may also consider developing individual pastoral care where

circumstances require. If you're uncertain what to do, please contact pandemic@ontario.anglican.ca

Churches must still collect contact information for everyone who attends.

Masks should be properly worn (covering the mouth, nose, and chin). Whichever option you choose, **masks must be worn by everyone at all times** except when receiving the sacrament or while eating or drinking at a social event while seated.

We are introducing new flexibility for **Worship Leaders (preachers, readers, and intercessors) to remove their masks indoors for liturgical speaking.**

- **Only one person may be unmasked at any one time and**
- **The unmasked speaker must remain stationary, physically distanced from others by a minimum of 4 metres**
- **It is HIGHLY recommended that for safety and protection, an unmasked speaker should speak from behind an impermeable (glass/plexiglass) barrier which prevents direct spreading of aerosol droplets.** The risk remains that a person (vaccinated or unvaccinated) may have been infected but is asymptomatic at that time but is still shedding the virus. To provide for a higher level of safety and protection it is recommended that BOTH the barrier and distance be utilized. If the require 4 metres of distancing cannot be provided, a barrier is mandatory. Please note that face shields are not a suitable alternative for protecting others.
- **Presiders at the altar, whether speaking or singing, must remain masked when the elements of bread and wine are before them (or within 4 metres), and during the distribution of the bread at holy communion.**
- **After touching (removing and replacing) their mask, the speaker must immediately sanitize their hands.**

If the recommended barrier is used, it should be as close to the speaker as is practical. The barrier should be as wide as possible/practical and at least 1 foot higher than the tallest speaker. The width would depend on how close it is to the speaker (the farther from the speaker, the larger it would need to be). It should be no less than 4 feet wide.

Are face shields an effective option? Per the provincial guidance:

A face shield is not a substitute for wearing a face mask as it does not filter respiratory droplets. A face shield may provide additional protection for the wearer against droplets expelled from another person; however, these droplets may still be inhaled around the shield. Respiratory droplets expelled by the wearer may escape around the sides of the face shield, which therefore provides less protection to others. If you choose to wear a face shield, we recommend - if possible - to wear it in addition to a properly fitted cloth masks.

Some churches have expressed concern that cost may be an issue in providing this extra barrier for safety. In order to assist churches in providing the higher level of safety, the diocese will offer a rebate of up to \$150 per church to assist in providing a barrier for a speaker position (pulpit, lectern, prayer desk, etc.). Churches can send an email with a scanned copy of a receipt for the shield as well as their request for rebate to pandemic@ontario.anglican.ca

It is still recommended that any microphone (e.g., at a lectern) that is used by more than one person be wiped down with a disinfecting wipe between each use.

Some activities increase the risk of catching or passing on coronavirus. This most frequently happens where people are doing activities which generate more particles as they breathe heavily, such as singing or raising their voices. The risk is greatest where these activities take place when people are in close contact with others indoors, particularly in poorly ventilated spaces.

All singers, including clergy if singing the liturgy, must always remain masked at all times. In accordance with our **diocesan vaccination policy**, all musicians and choristers, whether paid or volunteer, must be fully vaccinated to participate in music ministry during worship services. Full vaccination is also required for Congregational Singing. Proof of vaccination must be provided.

All singers must be distanced from each other by a minimum 2 meters. The choir must be distanced from the congregation by a minimum of 4 metres. The previous limit of 6 choristers is now changed to the number of choristers which can be physical distanced in the chancel/choir stalls. Singing in procession is not permitted at this time.

Choir practices also require masks and physical distancing as described above. Choir practices must be held in a well-ventilated space and not exceed 90 minutes in length. Self-screening and contact tracing must be in place.

Only one wind instrumentalist may perform at a time and must be distanced by a minimum of 4 metres from others. If more than one wind instrument is desired, they must be separated from each other and the congregation by impermeable barriers (glass or plexiglass)

These policies on singing also apply to those using or renting our halls or church buildings (e.g., community choirs).

The Health Units all advise that singing remains a High-Risk activity. However, where the Incumbent and Wardens chose, beginning Advent I, Congregational Singing will be permitted with certain restrictions in place:

- The church must ensure all in attendance have provided Proof of Vaccination or a valid Medical Exemption
- Physical Distancing between households within the congregation. **Individuals can be seated with members of their own household, but every member of the household must be seated at least 2m from every person outside their household.**
- Masks must be worn at all times singing.

It is recognized that the distancing required for singing places a capacity limitation on the building. Given the higher risk of singing, this is not optional.

No parish or congregation should feel obliged to re-start choral music programs if they are uncomfortable or feel unable to do so safely.

Those responsible (Wardens, Incumbent, Renter Groups) for activities must ensure a written safety plan is prepared and available. The plan must describe the measures and procedures which have or will be implemented to reduce the transmission risk of COVID-19. (Provincial Regulation). It should be posted in a public place.

The previous Amber guidelines for:

- **Liturgy**
- **Communion in one-kind (bread only)**
- **Proper Signage and Marking of people flow**
- **Limiting movement and interaction during services as much as possible**
- **No passing of Collection Plates.**
- **The Peace being non-Contact and must maintain physical distance.**
- **Self Assessment before entering**
- **Sanitizing Hands**
- **Sanitizing High Touch surfaces**
- **Collecting and retaining Contact Information for all in attendance**
- **Natural ventilation to be facilitated as much as possible by having doors and windows open to refresh the air in churches.**

all remain **unchanged** regardless of the option selected.

High touch areas (light switches, door handles, handrails, etc.) should continue to be cleaned regularly.

Books (Prayer, Bible) may be returned to pews

The focus on avoiding and preventing transmission of the COVID-19 virus has had an additional benefit in reducing transmission of Influenza (Flu) viruses as well. Continued care will assist in limiting the spread of colds and flu during the upcoming season.

The key guiding principle of our response to the pandemic is and always will be the need to preserve life and health. We also recognize that if circumstances change and health protocols are tightened, we will return to additional restriction once again. We take one step at a time.

APPENDIX A) – Quick Comparison

	Open Option	Restricted Option
Building Capacity	Based on Existing Distancing guidelines	Pre-COVID Fire Dept maximum capacity
Physical Distancing (between people in the same residence “bubble”)	2m minimum <u>required</u>	<u>Recommend</u> maintaining 2m as much as possible 2m <u>Required</u> if Congregational Singing
Masks during Worship	Required – exception for consuming sacrament and 1 Worship Leader with distancing and/or barriers	Required – exception for consuming sacrament and 1 Worship Leader with distancing and/or barriers
Chorale Ensemble Singing	Maximum of 6 singers in a choral ensemble/choir. Each person must be masked, distanced, and provide proof of full vaccination.	For Choral Ensembles, the number of choristers is limited to the available space in the chancel/stalls with 2m physical distancing. All singers must be distanced from each other by a minimum 2 meters and from the congregation by a minimum of 4 metres
Congregational Singing	No Congregational Singing	If the church choses to have congregational singing, it must ensure all in attendance have provided Proof of Vaccination or a valid Medical Exemption Physical Distancing between households within the congregation. Individuals can be seated with members of their own household, but every member of the household must be seated at least 2m from every person outside their household.

		Masks must be worn at all times when singing.
Social Activities	<p>Maximum of 25 people. All must maintain distancing.</p> <p>If Proof of Vaccination or Exemption is not required, no food or drink may be served. Masks must be worn at all times.</p>	<p>Maximum of 25 people. All must maintain distancing.</p> <p>If seated at a table, masks can be removed, but must be worn when moving to or from the table. Food can be picked up and carried to the table. Must maintain 2m distancing between households.</p>
Pre-Assessments	Required for entry	Required for entry
Contact Tracing	Required	Required
Parish Meetings (incl Parish Advisory Council)	<p>Wardens and Incumbent may choose not to require Proof of Vaccination or Medical Exemption.</p> <p>All must be physically distanced</p> <p>All must wear masks at all times.</p>	<p>Wardens and Incumbent may choose to require Proof of Vaccination or Medical Exemption.</p> <p>All must be physically distanced</p> <p>All must wear masks at all times.</p>
Formation	<p>Formation activities such as Bible or book studies, prayer groups, confirmation classes, and Sunday School for children (over 4 years of age) and youth activities may be held. The number permitted is the fewer of 25 persons or the number that may be safely physically distanced in the room being used.</p>	<p>Formation activities such as Bible or book studies, prayer groups, confirmation classes, and Sunday School for children (over 4 years of age) may be held. The number permitted is the fewer of 25 persons or the number that may be safely physically distanced in the room being used.</p> <p>For Youth programs for those over 12 years of age and with all present having provided proof of Double</p>

		Vaccination, the limit is the fewer of 25 persons or the number that may be safely physically distanced in the room being used
Meal Programs and Food Banks	<p>Maximum of 25 people or the number that may be safely physically distanced in the room being used. Masks must be worn, and physical distancing maintained.</p> <p>Those responsible must have a prepared Safety Plan</p>	<p>Capacity of a hall is limited to the number of people that may be seated while maintaining Physical Distancing between tables. If seated at a table, masks can be removed, but must be worn when moving to or from the table. Food can be picked up and carried to the table. Required to maintain 2m distancing when not seated. All local Public Health regulations must be followed</p> <p>Kitchen staff must maintain Physical Distancing OR have impermeable barriers between workstations. Those responsible must have a prepared Safety Plan</p>
Fund Raising Events	<p>Maximum of 25 people or the capacity limit of the space based on physical distancing. All must maintain distancing. Food or drink may not be served. Masks must be worn</p>	<p>Capacity is limited by the number of people that can be physically distanced at least 2m in the space being used. Indoor fundraising and social activities, including concerts and bazaars, may be organized, provided all participants show proof of vaccination, distancing is able to be maintained in the event space and masks requirements are in place. Food or beverages can only be provided as per the restrictions above (Seated)</p>
Concert Events	Not permitted (Proof of Vaccination is mandatory)	All attending must have made a reservation to do so

		<p>Individuals can be seated with members of their own household, but every member of the household must be seated at least 2m from every person outside their household.</p> <p>Those responsible for the event must prepare a safety plan</p>

Signage

Regulations require that signs be displayed in entries and other conspicuous places. You may find resources to download and print:

For Hastings & Prince Edward

<https://hpepublichealth.ca/healthy-workplaces/>

For KFLA

<https://www.kflaph.ca/en/healthy-living/covid-19-signage.aspx>

For Leeds Grenville Lanark

<https://healthunit.org/coronavirus/>

APPENDIX B) – VENTILATION

COVID1-9 virus particles spread between people more readily indoors than outdoors. Indoors, the concentration of viral particles is often higher than outdoors, where even a light wind can rapidly reduce concentrations. When indoors, ventilation mitigation strategies can help reduce viral particle concentration. The lower the concentration, the less likely viral particles can be inhaled into the lungs (potentially lowering the inhaled dose); contact eyes, nose, and mouth; or fall out of the air to accumulate on surfaces. Protective ventilation practices can reduce the airborne concentrations and reduce the overall viral dose to occupants.

Each building is unique, however in general, given the age and design of our church buildings, ventilation system upgrades or improvements can increase the delivery of clean air and dilute potential contaminants. Churches are encouraged to consult experienced heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) professionals when considering changes to HVAC systems and equipment.

There are a lot of options which can contribute towards a reduction in risk. These ventilation options can reduce the risk of exposure to the virus and reduce the spread of disease, but they will not eliminate risk completely.

The following tools identify ways to improve ventilation:

- Increase the introduction of outdoor air:
 - Where possible, open outdoor air dampers beyond minimum settings to reduce HVAC air recirculation. In mild weather, this will not affect thermal comfort or humidity. However, this may be difficult to do in cold, hot, or humid weather, and may require consultation with an experienced HVAC professional.
 - Open windows and doors, when weather conditions allow, to increase outdoor air flow. Even a slightly open window can introduce beneficial outdoor air.
- Use fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows:
 - To safely achieve this, fan placement is important and will vary based on room configuration.
 - Avoid placing fans in a way that could potentially cause contaminated air to flow directly from one person to another
 - Avoid the use of the high-speed settings
 - Use ceiling fans at low velocity and potentially in the reverse-flow direction (so that air is pulled up toward the ceiling)
 - Direct the fan discharge towards an unoccupied corner and wall spaces or up above the occupied zone.
 - One helpful strategy is to use a window fan, placed safely and securely in a window, to exhaust room air to the outdoors. This will help draw outdoor air into the room via other open windows and doors without generating strong room air currents. Similar results can be established in larger facilities using other fan systems, such as gable fans and roof ventilators.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space. Regularly clean/replace filters where the exist.

- Rebalance or adjust HVAC systems to increase total airflow to occupied spaces when possible.
- Improve air filtration:
 - Increase air filtration to as high as possible without significantly reducing design airflow. Increased filtration efficiency is especially helpful when enhanced outdoor air delivery options are limited.
 - Make sure air filters are properly sized and within their recommended service life.
 - Inspect filter housing and racks to ensure appropriate filter fit and minimize air that flows around, instead of through, the filter.
- Ensure restroom exhaust fans are functional and operating at full capacity when the building is occupied.
- Inspect and maintain exhaust ventilation systems in areas such as kitchens, cooking areas, etc. Operate these systems any time these spaces are occupied. Operating them even when the specific space is not occupied will increase overall ventilation within the occupied building.
- Use portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to enhance air cleaning (especially in higher risk areas such as a nurse's office or areas frequently inhabited by people with a higher likelihood of having COVID-19 and/or an increased risk of getting COVID-19).
- Generate clean-to-less-clean air movement by evaluating and repositioning as necessary, the supply louvers, exhaust air grilles, and/or damper settings. This recommendation is easier to accomplish when the supply and exhaust points are located in a ceiling grid system.
- Consider the use of [ultraviolet germicidal irradiation \(UVGI\)](#) as a supplemental treatment to inactivate SARS-CoV-2 when options for increasing room ventilation and filtration are limited. These systems can be used to provide air cleaning within occupied spaces, and in-duct UVGI systems can help enhance air cleaning inside central ventilation systems.
- Run the HVAC system at maximum with outside airflow for 2 hours before and after the building is occupied.

The ventilation interventions listed above come with a range of initial costs and operating costs, which, along with risk assessment factor may affect the selection of tools and approach. The following are examples of some "rough" cost estimates for ventilation interventions:

- No cost: opening windows; inspecting and maintaining dedicated exhaust ventilation; disabling DCV controls; repositioning outdoor air dampers
- Less than \$100: using fans to increase effectiveness of open windows; repositioning supply/exhaust diffusers to create directional airflow
- \$500 and up: adding portable HEPA fan/filter systems
- \$1500 and up: adding upper room UVGI

Again, it is recommended to consult with your HVAC expert.