



Updated COVID-19 Guidelines

Effective December 15, 2021

The COVID-19 Pandemic continues to evolve, creating both change and challenge as we remain focused on safeguarding and protecting our congregations and the communities we serve.

The latest variant, Omicron is the fifth Variant of Concern of SARS-COV-2 (there are other Variants of Interest). These Variants are evolutions of the virus and bring with them increased transmissibility, disease severity, risk of reinfection and vaccine performance. It appears from many sources that two shots of immunization may have a significantly lower (25-30%) level of effectiveness against Omicron. A third booster brings effectiveness to a level that is more consistent with what two shots provided against the Delta variant (75-80%). Together with a higher level of transmissibility, Omicron is quickly becoming the dominant strain and is driving a significant part of the current and projected infection rates in KFLA. There are projections that indicate that the experience in KFLA is an early indicator of how the rest of the province will develop in the next weeks.

We are also seeing differing status across the three Public Health Units in our Diocese.

Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox Addington (KFLA) is amongst the highest in terms of cases per inhabitants. It sits in the middle in terms of percentage of Vaccinations per Eligible Population Aged 5 and up.

Leeds, Grenville & Lanark is amongst the lowest in terms of cases per inhabitants. It also has the highest percentage of Vaccinations per Eligible Population Aged 5 and up.

Hastings & Prince Edward sits in the middle of cases per inhabitants. It also sits in the middle in terms of percentage of Vaccinations per Eligible Population Aged 5 and up.

In response to the situation in KFLA, the Medical Officer of Health has issued a Letter of Instruction and most recently a Class Order. While not specific to churches, it covers situations and activities which are shared in our churches. This Order reflects the high risk that comes when spaces are crowded, when removing masks (e.g., eating/drinking) and from activities where heavy or higher exertion breathing occurs (e.g., singing, dancing).

Effective today, we will re-implement some restrictions that previously were in place. Specifically, this RESTRICTED AMBER for across all churches of the diocese reflects:

- Social Activities (including coffee hours after service) are not permitted.
- No Food or Drink to be served at any meeting or at any time.
- Masks must be worn by everyone in the building at all times. This includes the Presider/Celebrant, Readers, Prayer Leaders, etc., regardless if barriers are in place or not.
- Congregational Singing is permitted but must be done softly with a mask properly worn at all times. For clarity, all people attending should be instructed to sing without any additional projection over a normal speaking voice.
- Each person entering should be asked if they have completed the Self-Assessment and should confirm they have no symptoms. Please ensure the Self-Assessment poster is posted prominently at all entrances. Each Health Unit provides signage on their website.

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

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

<https://healthunit.org/health-information/covid-19/>

In addition, all churches located in the Kingston-Frontenac-Lennox Addington Public Health Unit have an additional limitation on capacity:

- Capacity limits on churches and halls. The maximum capacity is the number of people that can be seated with 2 metres of Physical Distancing between each person. This capacity remains regardless of how people are actually seated (in family units). This limitation returns the capacity for churches in KFLA to what it was before the Nov 12 Guidelines took effect.

Please note that this restriction applies to the Health Unit area, rather than the Deanery area.

As always, the leadership of each church (Wardens and Incumbent/Priest In Charge) can choose to apply more restrictive measures to respond to the needs of their community.

Additional guidelines may need to be applied depending on how the situation evolves in the coming days and weeks. There is a great deal of focus on the Christmas Services. Given the rapid changes being seen, it makes sense for each church to:

- Remain flexible and be prepared to adjust and adapt as the situation and restrictions change.
- Continue to offer online worship for those that cannot or choose not to attend in person
- Prepare contingency plans in the event that we are again forced to close our buildings for worship and public access
- Continue to care and be mindful of the needs of all in your community and congregation

Changes to Amber RESTRICTED Guidelines – December 14, 2021

There have been a number of situations arise where the use of COVID Rapid Test Kits or Antigen Test Kits has been requested. It should be noted that these kits, while providing results in about 15 minutes, have an accuracy level of 80-85% in catching those who are infected with the virus. The accuracy can be lower in those who are early phases of an infection, before the virus has replicated, and symptoms are developing. Note that the Rapid tests are different than Polymerase Chain Reactions (PCR) test used in clinics/laboratories. The PCR tests are more accurate in detecting even minute traces of the virus.

Kits are being made available through both Federal and Provincial programs. The Rapid Test kits are recommended for screening of asymptomatic individuals rather than testing. It forms another part of a strong screening and protection strategy and practice, along with Self-Assessment, Masks, Distancing, etc. This screening is not generally recommended for individuals who are fully vaccinated.

We have been advised that kits are available to churches, generally at no cost. Each church that wishes to screen must:

- Work through their local health unit to ensure proper training (administering and reading results) and disposal of used kits is in place
- Have a plan in place to respond should any individual test positive

Rapid/Antigen Test guidance can be found:

https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_testing_guidance.pdf

Kits are available from a number of locations. Many of the local Chamber of Commerce locations have kits available.

For those that are unable to provide Proof of Vaccination, churches can now choose to accept negative Rapid Test/Antigen Test no more than 60 min before a service. This applies for those involved in the leadership of worship or of the church (Lay Readers, musicians, side-people, etc.). This option is available, but each church can make the decision best suited to their circumstance and community. The screening result should be recorded and kept along with contact information. Obviously, those unvaccinated are at the highest risk and make individual choices (50 times more likely to be hospitalized with the virus compared to the fully vaccinated people of the same age and 46 times more likely to die from the virus).

The pandemic continues to evolve and Omicron is clearly another major development. We will continue to monitor, evaluate and adjust as new information emerges and governments (of all levels) change guidance and regulations. We all need to remain flexible and be prepared to adjust quickly.

Please continue to pray for all those affected by this deadly virus and for all the lives that have been changed in so many ways.

*Lord Jesus Christ,
you taught us to love our neighbour,
and to care for those in need
as if we were caring for you.
In this time of anxiety, give us strength
to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick,
and to assure the isolated
of our love, and your love,
for your name's sake.
Amen.*