

11 March 2022

Dear Sisters and brothers,

On this second anniversary of the World Health Organization's declaration of a global pandemic we have had an update from Dr. Henry on measures moving forwards. Yesterday, Dr. Henry and Minister Dix announced several changes to COVID-19 restrictions including:

- Lifting the indoor mask order
- **Lifting capacity limits on faith gatherings**
- Eased restrictions on overnight camps for children and youth
- Eased of restrictions on long-term care visitors

These are in effect as of today.

There is no longer a requirement to restrict attendance based on vaccination status for faith-based worship services.

Masks are optional; however people may want to continue wearing a mask based on personal choice. Individual businesses and organizations can choose to continue to require mask wearing on their premises.

What will this mean for us in the Territory of the People. It is my opinion that we proceed with cautious optimism. Cautious in that I propose that we remain receiving only the bread for Eucharist and refrain from physical sharing of the peace until Easter. I fully understand that for some, a return to sharing fully in Eucharist or in the physical sharing of the peace is not even something that they wish to consider right now. I remind you that taking communion in one kind only is your choice.

Masking is now optional, but I would ask you to continue to mask in church until the end of March so that we can be sure that the numbers are still trending downwards. Similarly, I would ask you to be very respectful of those who wish to maintain physical distance from people outside their household.

Optimism, in that we have a vaccine, we have treatments for COVID-19 infections, we know the importance of masking when sick or around vulnerable people. I give such grateful thanks for the skills of our healthcare workers and those who have been tireless in their support of their neighbours during these past two years. Is COVID-19 over, no not yet. However, we are in a very different place than we were two years ago.

All that being said, we remember those who have lost family members over the last two years, those sick at this time and those struggling with the effects of long-COVID.

Let us pray for those who have died as a result of COVID-19 and those who mourn:

God, so many have been taken away.

Their names tumble from our lips,

a remembrance, an insistence, a plea.

We say their names so that they won't be forgotten.

We say their names so that we won't be the type of people willing to forget.

As we grieve and grasp at the mystery of death,

take their names and bind them to yourself;

open your everlasting gates and welcome them home. Amen.

We will need to be extraordinarily gracious to one another as people's comfort levels with the lifting of restrictions will be varied. Some members of our communities will wish to remain masking for the foreseeable future. I know that you will respect this, none of us knows the full situation of the other person. There are people who might be sick, who might be in treatment for cancer, or awaiting surgery, or people who care for vulnerable individuals. Let us always err on the side of being the most loving and pastoral that we can be. I urge parish councils and vestries to talk through these new changes so that we can all support one another. Coffee hours and parish meals can resume.

Let us pray for our communities

We are not people of fear: we are people of courage.

We are not people who protect our own safety: we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.

We are not people of greed: we are people of generosity.

We are your people God,

giving and loving,

wherever we are,

whatever it costs

For as long as it takes wherever you call us. AMEN

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions moving forward. God bless you and thank you for your ministry in Christ's name

