



From the Office of the Archbishop

To the Clergy and People of the Diocese of Calgary

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We live in a world that has changed much over the last several decades, or at least, we perceive it to have changed much because of the advances of technology and the processes of globalization. The reality is that for almost all of us, our daily lives are lived on a stable foundation of assumed and often unconscious patterns and practices that allow us to accomplish far more than if we were trying to figure out each new day afresh with every morning. For Christians the cornerstone of that foundation is our faith in God as revealed to us through Jesus and by the Holy Spirit - and the way of life that springs from it in practices of gathering for worship, prayer, fellowship and mutual support in the journey of our lives lived in faith, day by day, week by week and year by year. The COVID pandemic has disrupted the pattern and rhythm of that faith life, creating disorientation, a resulting desire for “return”, as well as a challenge to respond creatively to a new reality. It may be that when all is said and done on the COVID experience that we will be “back to normal”; but that would be most unfortunate. Disruption and disorientation are always opportunities to dig deeper in faith and look carefully at what we do for signs of new directions – new seeds being scattered in the proclamation of faith that should be tended and nurtured for growth. They are opportunities, without diminishing the real suffering and grief experienced by many, that can lead us to look into our hearts and renew our commitment to “being transformed by the renewing of our minds”, seeking to live the faith we have been gifted with, learning to love God and neighbor in new and renewed ways, and inviting others into this rich life of faith that God has graced us with.

The document that comes with this letter is the work of our taskforce on how we will go about “returning to public worship.” As the document itself is careful to point out, we are not going back to the way things were. We recognize that COVID has not “gone away” or is “going away” but is still with us. The protocols in the document tell how we can have a return to a form of public worship that recognizes that current and ongoing reality, and adapts for it. Beyond that I hope and pray that we will also be giving careful consideration to lessons learned or being learned.

Having been unable to gather physically for worship for some while now –

How will we accommodate those who because of age, vulnerability or prudent caution decide they must continue to absent themselves from physical presence at worship?

What have we learned about the experience of those of our folk who already could not gather even before the pandemic? Are who willing to make use of the COVID adaptations to address this lack for them?

What have we learned from the presence and viewing of online worship by those who have not previously had a connection with our parishes? Are we able to use an online worship presence as a welcome mat, or entrance way, for those curious or feeling a need – those being drawn to a new life of faith?

Many parishes re-discovered the value of the “telephone tree” and found themselves nurtured by regular connection and conversation by phone and outside of Sunday morning – what lessons might be drawn to inform us about what true Christian fellowship is about?

Some clergy have reported that pastoral contact and conversation has actually grown and deepened in the absence of physical gatherings for worship – how might we make use of that gift as we attend to the nurture of our collective spiritual life, even as we begin to recover the physical gatherings?

As opportunity for other activities has greatly diminished, we have found more folks able and willing to participate in online bible studies, discussions and educational events; how might the current experience inform our choices and perhaps highlight the distractions that draw us away from a deeper life of faith, worship and service.

There certainly are, and will be, more such questions and considerations to ponder in the coming months. I present just a few in order to urge us toward thought, discernment and hopefully wisdom to be drawn from this “moment” in our life as disciples of Jesus.

I am deeply grateful to the Taskforce for its work on “Returning to Public Worship” and I thank them for the offering of time, expertise and loving care that has gone into this work. Given what has been provided by them, and thinking through what needs to be done in preparation for the return to public worship, I am setting **September 1st, 2020** as the date for allowing gatherings to begin for public worship. Those gatherings, however, must conform to the guidelines and protocols given in the Taskforce’s document.

Please read it thoroughly – and note that those wishing to re-open must complete the attached checklist indicating that protocols will be observed in their particular setting. Please also fill out the attached **application form**, signed, and return to cmoore@calgary.anglican.ca along with the completed checklist. You will receive a response when permission is granted.

I would also add that this is about permission to re-open, not a requirement for those who wish to take longer in making their way back to public gatherings.

I ask, above all, that we work together prayerfully, thoughtfully and graciously so that the way we “re-open” will itself be an expression of and a witness to the love that we have known in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.



The Most Rev. Gregory Kerr-Wilson
Archbishop of Calgary and Metropolitan of Rupert’s Land



Anglican Diocese of Calgary – Returning to Public Worship

Loving our neighbour as our self in a pandemic includes recognizing that our actions can have consequences that affect many more people than the few who have gathered for worship. With that in mind, proceeding in the safest possible manner is our priority as we consider reopening our church buildings for public worship.

Parishes wishing to “reopen” for public worship services will need to make a request of the Archbishop, or to such person or body to whom the Archbishop assigns this responsibility. In making such a request, the parish must be able to demonstrate that they have plans in place that allow for adherence to all current Provincial and Alberta Health Services guidelines for [Places of Worship](#) and any identified guidelines specific to the Diocese of Calgary.

We recognize that every parish’s situation is unique and because of that each parish must make plans to adhere to guidelines that are relevant in their context. In order to facilitate preparedness that acknowledges local context, a checklist has been developed to help identify the various plans that need to be in place in order to open for public worship. Parishes will have to be able to answer “Yes” to all points on the checklist and be prepared to discuss their plans before permission to engage in public worship is granted.

It is important to understand that the permission to reopen is not permission to return to pre-Covid 19 practices. Public worship in this time of pandemic will look vastly different to what we are used to. Being that a significant proportion of our membership is categorized in provincial guidelines as being at risk because of age or other factors, parishes are encouraged to continue to offer remote means of worship and connecting with parishioners. Consideration should be given to using opportunities for public gathering as a means of supplementing that which is being done remotely rather than replacing those efforts.

A Checklist for Returning to Public Worship

Supporting Congregants' Safety

Guideline	Yes	No
Have we planned for staff, visitors and congregation to use the self-assessment tool (https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Journey/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx) before attending or upon arrival?		
Have we assessed how many people can attend in our space given the physical distancing requirements?		
Are we able to effectively provide staff, visitors, and congregation information on the requirements for operation and the importance to prevent the spread of COVID-19?		
Do we have signs indicating COVID-19 physical distancing protocols?		
Do we have a plan to ensure that physical distancing is maintained between people who are not from the same household at all times?		
The Diocese recommends the use of masks by the attendees. Do we have a supply of masks available?		
Can we offer masks at the point of entry?		
Children under age 2 must remain with their parents. Can we offer Sunday School following the Provincial Day Camp Guidelines for older children? If not all children must remain with their parents.		
Will we be vigilant in reminding congregants to maintain physical distancing after they have left the church?		

Supporting Staff and Religious Leaders

Guideline	Yes	No
Can we ensure that leaders in our church are actively supporting COVID-19 prevention activities, procedures, and education?		
Will we provide staff and volunteers information and training about appropriate physical distancing, processes, and hygiene practices?		

Facilities

Guidelines	Yes	No
Can we, if necessary, control and stagger entry into our facilities?		
Are we able to clearly mark and maintain proper social distance spacing for lineups?		
Can we maintain a single point of entry and a separate point of exit? If not, do have a plan to control entries and exits to maintain social distancing? <i>This may include staggered arrival or dismissal.</i>		
Can we ensure hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol content is available at facility entrance and exit and available throughout the venue?		
Will we remind congregants to clean their hands upon entry and exit?		
Have we developed and implemented procedures for increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of high traffic areas, common areas, public washrooms?		
Have we developed a plan to frequently clean and disinfect high-touch/shared surfaces such as doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, faucets and taps, elevator buttons, railings?		
Have we got a plan to clean and sanitize at least once between services?		
Can seating be arranged or marked (in case of pews) to ensure social distancing?		
Have we removed books, printed materials, and other objects from the bookracks in the pews?		
Have we made provision for the projection of service materials or for single use printed service materials that can be disposed of?		

Cultural and Religious Practices

Guideline	Yes	No
Can we ensure there is no contact between congregants such as hand shaking or the sharing of communal items (e.g. communion chalice, offering plates, microphones)?		
Will we discourage social gatherings before or after the service?		
If having communion, do we have a comprehensive plan for preparation, consecration, and distribution that is compliant with AHS guidelines? (See Appendix for Best Practices).		

Singing

Guidelines	Yes	No
Do we have a soloist or alternative to singing?		
Can we make sure members of the congregation know that participation in singing during worship services is forbidden under current provincial guidelines?		

Support for Public Health

Guidelines	Yes	No
Will we keep a confidential list of congregants (voluntary for attendees) at each service (for two weeks) to enable management of cases through contact tracing and follow-up? This information must not be used for any other purpose.		
Will we maintain an up-to-date contact list for all staff and volunteers, including names, addresses and phone numbers?		
Will we keep a list of which volunteers and staff are present on any given day?		

N.B. If you checked “no” to any of the above, please provide reasons on the application form.

Appendix

Best Practices for Holy Communion

General

The scheduling of services should take into account the amount of time necessary between services for the volunteer shift change and information-sharing, the cleaning and sanitizing of pews and of sacred vessels used, and other necessary preparatory work.

Sacred vessels should be purified and washed with soap and water after the Eucharist has ended. Priests may wish to do this themselves so as to ensure physical distancing and avoiding unnecessary contact with other people.

Singing is prohibited.

Entrance and recessional processions are to be omitted and the priest celebrant should enter directly from the sacristy.

Only one lector should be involved and be asked to proclaim all the readings.

Altar servers should not be used at this time.

The chalice, paten, ciborium, cruets, etc. should be placed on a small credence table next to the altar for easy access by the priest.

If the priest is not wearing a non-medical mask during the liturgy of the Eucharist, all ciboria must be covered with palls at all times. The priest will be required to wear a mask during the distribution of Holy Communion.

No presentation of the gifts is to be made. At the time of the preparation of the altar, the hosts for consecration to be consumed by the congregants should be placed on a separate corporal slightly to the side of the priest host on the altar, covered with a pall.

No collection is taken during the service. Basket may be placed near the entrance or at an accessible and monitored location within the church. Secure vigilance over the donations should be ensured.

There will be no physical contact at the Sign of the Peace.

There will be no children's liturgies during the service.

There will be no holy water in the fonts.

All hymn books, prayer books, pew cards, pencils, donation envelopes, and other loose items in the pews must be removed.

Distribution of Holy Communion

The individual attestation at the moment of distribution of Holy Communion (“The Body of Christ, R: Amen”) is eliminated; instead one general pronouncement (“The Body of Christ”) is to be made by the priest, and one general response (“Amen”) is to be made by all congregants together before the distribution begins. Then each person who wishes to receive comes forward in processions and receives in silence.

The priest must wear a non-medical mask during the distribution of Holy communion, as must the communicants.

Only the bread will be distributed. The wine will not be distributed at this time.

Holy communion may only be received in the hand. A small table will be placed next to the priest, on which is to be placed a corporal and a bottle of sanitizer. If during distribution a priest feels that their hand has touched that hands of a communicant, they must immediately pause, place the ciborium on the corporal, sanitize their hands, and continue with the distribution.

Physical distancing must be maintained during the Communion procession. There can only be one single file Communion line. Members of the same household need not observe physical distancing with one another during the Communion procession.

Only the priest will distribute communion to reduce the number of ministers.

If a priest has underlying health conditions, or is otherwise unable to distribute the Communion, they may delegate the task to a properly instructed eucharistic minister who does not come from a high-risk or vulnerable age group.

Ministers of Holy communion must sanitize their hands immediately after receiving Holy Communion before distributing Holy communion to others. They must also sanitize their hands after the distribution.

Receiving Communion

- Come up to communion in single file and physically distanced (2 metres (6 feet) apart).
- On arrival, sanitize hands, then remove mask without touching the front of the mask.
- Receive and consume the sacrament.
- Put the mask back on by touching the sides only.
- Immediately sanitize hands before going back to your seat. Maintain physical distance from other congregants.

Gloves

Use of gloves is not recommended. Frequent hand washing with soap and water, along with use of hand sanitizer with 60% alcohol content or greater is a far more effective way to stop the transmission of viruses through touch than the use of latex gloves.

Resources

[Diocese of Edmonton guidelines.](#)

[Diocese of New Westminster guidelines.](#)

[Catholic Diocese of Calgary guidelines.](#)

[Alberta Guidance for Places of Worship](#)