



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP OF NIAGARA

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Advent and Christmas Ministry Guidelines During COVID-19

EFFECTIVE NOVEMBER 12, 2020

With Advent and Christmas approaching and planning well underway, the following guidance is being offered in addition to our current guidelines to ensure our celebrations are undertaken in a manner that is as safe as possible, recognizing that the high level of current COVID-19 cases throughout the diocese.

Outdoor Caroling

Mindful that it will be difficult for people not to be able to sing their favourite Advent or Christmas carol, the old-fashioned practice of caroling, as a pastoral support, will be permitted during the month of December.

As many as 4 carolers may make pastoral visits to lift the spirits of isolated or vulnerable parishioners.

All carolers must be masked at all times, remain outdoors, and maintain 2 metres physical distance from one another and at least 4m physical distance from the people they are visiting. All relevant public health and ministry and guidelines must be adhered to, including recording contact tracing information.

Advent wreaths

One member from a congregation may be selected to light the Advent candle(s) each week. Hands must be sanitized before handling the lighter or taper and physical distance is to be maintained during the lighting.

Christmas Services

This Christmas will be different than any other one in memory, and that will be a loss which is important to acknowledge in preparation for the season.

Pre-registration for Christmas Eve services is strongly encouraged, as is a protocol for drop-in worshippers.

With some anticipation that worshippers who attend these services may not be familiar with current liturgical protocols, detailed expectations for the conduct of worshippers must be communicated prior to, and at the beginning of, all Christmas services.

The Bishop expects a Christmas Day service will be offered either in-person or online by every parish.

Parishes are also encouraged to live into the fullness of the Christmas season, especially where interest may stretch current capacity limits and clergy resources, by offering special in-person Christmas services through Epiphany, rather than focus solely on Christmas Eve. Services should be spaced in such a way as cleaning is possible between worship and the church can be ventilated with outside air.

If individual candles are used during services by worshippers, they are to be deposited in a receptacle and not to be re-used at another service this season.

Special services designed for children/families are encouraged, however, pageants must be offered virtually.

Congregational singing is not permitted. Clergy are encouraged to proactively consider how best to share this expectation (via bulletins/announcements) and how to respond should spontaneous singing occur.

Clergy are encouraged to direct their parishioners to the diocesan Facebook Page and/or YouTube channel for a special Advent Lessons and Carols service on December 20 at 7pm and for a Christmas service on December 24 at 6pm, if online parish services are not available.