



# OFFICE OF THE BISHOP OF NIAGARA

## ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

### **Liturgical, Ministry, & Pastoral Care Guidelines in Response to COVID-19** *Grey - Lockdown*

EFFECTIVE January 12, 2021

In response to the locally surging levels of COVID-19 cases, all are subject to the following liturgical, ministry and pastoral care guidelines, mirroring the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario's Red Stage and Government of Ontario's Grey-Lockdown regulations and Emergency Declaration.

**All permissions to re-open for in-person worship, granted in accordance with the Amber Stage of the Province's Re-opening Framework, are suspended until further notice.**

The ongoing provision of worship, ministry, pastoral care is an essential function the Church provides to our communities, especially so in times of crisis and illness. Adaptive approaches and ministry practices are to be deployed and prayer and pastoral care ministries must continue to be a priority of all clergy and lay leaders.

All directives of the Government of Ontario and local public health authorities must be followed at all times, including the following foundational pandemic hygiene guidance: washing hands often; staying home if feeling ill; practising physical distancing and where not possible, wearing a mask or face covering. To help protect the communities we serve, we also encourage [the use of the COVID Alert mobile app](#).

Find out about the [latest public health measures, advice and restrictions for your area here](#).

### **A. Building & General Ministry Guidelines**

1. Until further notice, church buildings are to be closed for all purposes, except for the operation of licensed day care centres, where permitted by the Ministry of Education.
2. Occasional and time-limited access to the building is only permitted in the following circumstances:
  - a. for designated contractors, staff and/or volunteers to conduct inspections and/or essential maintenance of the building;
  - b. for staff to perform essential functions that could not otherwise be completed from home;
  - c. for volunteers to provide essential services to those who live in poverty, those who are food insecure, and/or those who are precariously housed; food drives are not permitted at this time;
  - d. for a priest, musician, and no more than three others to produce online worship services; and
  - e. for tenants and license agreement holders to access their designated spaces, where permitted by provincial and/or municipal regulations.
3. Any confirmed case of COVID-19 involving a person who may have attended church property must be immediately reported to the diocesan executive officer by the rector or priest-in-charge.
4. Vestry meetings are to be conducted virtually in accordance with the regulations approved by synod council and published on the online diocesan resource hub.
5. Musicians are not permitted to practice in church buildings during this closure, unless it is during the production of an online worship service and only for as minimum of time as is necessary.
6. Hall and/or other community space rentals to parishioners or community groups, including 12-step groups, are not permitted.

## **B. Pastoral Care Guidelines**

1. Clergy and pastoral care teams should regularly communicate with all parishioners by phone, email, social media and/or other remote means, prioritizing those who may be isolated.
2. Clergy and lay pastoral assistants are to provide pastoral care primarily by remote means for all but the most essential visits and/or emergency care.
3. Pastoral visits with those who are self-isolating or have an active case of COVID-19 are prohibited.
4. Anointing and/or a last Eucharistic meal to the dying is permitted, provided hands are washed or sanitized before and afterwards, and all vessels and linens are cleaned.
5. Where permitted, adhere to all institutional guidelines when visiting retirement homes, long-term care facilities and/or hospitals.
6. Following a visit to an institution where COVID-19 may be present, wash your hands thoroughly, go directly home, and immediately wash clothes worn during the visit in hot water.

## **C. Liturgical Guidelines**

1. In-person worship, except for the purposes of producing online worship services, is not permitted.
2. Clergy are encouraged to direct their parishioners to the diocesan Facebook Page and/or YouTube channel for Sunday Prayers with Bishop Susan Bell, if online parish services are not available.
3. No more than 5 people shall be physically present for the preparation of any online worship service, and each person shall be actively screened for COVID-19 using [this online self-assessment tool](#). The frequency, number of participants, and duration of online services is to be limited as much as possible and clergy are encouraged to lead services of the Word from their home wherever possible.
4. All worshippers should wash their hands before and after worship. Priests and communion ministers shall sanitize their hands immediately prior to handling the elements and administering communion.
5. A distance of 2 metres shall be maintained, except for vocalists who shall maintain 4 metres distance.
6. The use of masks and face coverings is required except for brief instances where those leading the service have speaking roles, where permitted by local by-laws. Vocalists must wear masks while singing.
7. External ventilation (open doors or windows) is recommended to be facilitated during recordings.

### ***The Eucharist***

1. Priests are permitted to celebrate the Eucharist with spiritual communion as part of an online worship service, provided that:
  - a. the service is conducted from a consecrated church building;
  - b. member(s) of the laity will be present and take a part in the offering of the service;
  - c. all liturgical hygiene practices and foundational pandemic practices will be observed;
  - d. those present may only be seen to receive in one kind (bread) and that wine will be consumed solely by the celebrant, off-camera if possible; and
  - e. a communal prayer of spiritual communion will be said and the congregation watching will be offered the prayers to make their personal spiritual communion.

### ***Pastoral Offices***

1. All weddings, funerals and baptisms, including graveside interments and nuptial blessings, are to be postponed until further notice. In rare and exceptional circumstances, permission may be sought from the regional archdeacon to conduct a pastoral office for which the extraordinary pastoral needs are such that postponing the service is not possible. If permission is granted, such services are to be held in private and in such a way as the number of those gathered in-person is kept to 5 people or less.