



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP OF NIAGARA

Anglican Church of Canada

TO THE CLERGY, LICENSED LAY WORKERS & WARDENS OF THE DIOCESE

June 17, 2020

Dear friends,

Well it's been a big news week: a further drop in active COVID-19 cases in Ontario has meant a greater loosening of pandemic restrictions.

As Archdeacon Bill Mous reiterated yesterday, notwithstanding the changes, we remain committed to a gradual and cautious return to our churches. Our buildings will not be open for Sunday worship until at least September.

To further clarify and assist in our plans and signals for reopening, the provincial House of Bishops has produced [this staged document that is a template for the general conditions of return](#).

This document is distinguished from the Government of Ontario's directives, and outlines our particular concerns as a faith community. There will necessarily be variations from diocese to diocese as we approach the time for more granular detail but this document functions as a general road map. It will be important for all leaders to consult our online diocesan COVID-19 Resource Hub in the days ahead in order to stay abreast of the unfolding situation and to read the guidelines which pertain specifically to the Diocese of Niagara.

You will see that there are three stages: red, amber, and green. As of this Friday, we are considered to be in the red stage. This stage in the template offers a high-level and general picture of what is permitted. For further details of what this means for us in Niagara, our diocesan ministry guidelines will be updated on Thursday.

In other developments as this season of change continues, this evening I will be celebrating a service of Holy Eucharist with Spiritual Communion livestreamed from our Cathedral at 7pm.

A word about this practice: although spiritual communion is not very familiar in our part of the Anglican Church in Canada, it is practiced in the more northern and remote reaches of our country where distance and travel are issues. In these extraordinary times it allows for us to continue to celebrate the sacrament and to do so in as safe a manner as we may.

This is a service of the Eucharist using prayers of consecration from either The Book of Alternative Services or the Lutheran Book of Worship. At this time, no more than five people - inclusive of the celebrant - may perform the sacrament and this only for the purposes of online worship services. At all times provincial and diocesan guidelines for physical distancing and appropriate liturgical hygiene must be adhered to by all participants.

The Right Reverend Susan J. A. Bell
Cathedral Place, 252 James St. N., Hamilton, Ontario L8R 2L3 Tel: 905-527-1316
Email: bishop@niagaraanglican.ca Twitter: @BishopSBell

At the time of reception, prayers for spiritual reception are provided which communicate the understanding that as we receive Christ spiritually, we are united by the Spirit of Christ even though we are physically distanced. From June 21st, clergy in Niagara may, if they choose, celebrate the Eucharist for the purposes of an online service only and using the authorized liturgy only. No priest must celebrate the Eucharist at this time. It is entirely acceptable to preserve the eucharistic fast if that fits the ministry context and piety of the parish.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to be in touch with the bishop's office.

I look forward to welcoming you to this evening's service which is offered to the glory of God and in prayer for the unity and continued life of our Church.

As ever, thank you for your faithful witness, your unstinting ministry work and your prayers for our diocese and our Church. Although these are complex times, I believe the Holy Spirit is working something new and exciting in us. I'm so glad to be on this journey with all of you.

Blessings,

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Niagara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small cross at the beginning.

Bishop of Niagara