

The Anglican Church of Canada
Diocese of Athabasca
The Anglican Centre

From the Bishop:
The Right Reverend David Greenwood

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Dear Clergy and Parish Leaders in Athabasca:

May our good and loving Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you in every fullness.

As St. John recorded for us, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” Covid-19 has been tough on many people, not excepting ourselves. Remember that we have the most realistic of faiths. The darkness still exists, and we need to deal with it – but the light of Christ, shining through us, shall not be overcome. This light of Christ is in you.

A key to Christian love is restraint – in serving Christ, we seek not to fulfill our own whims or desires, but rather what is healthiest for the other. We restrain ourselves in order to practice our love of God, our neighbour, and ourselves; in order to be truly human – Image of God. I want to thank you for your restraint in closing in-person worship services, in wearing masks when amongst others, and in following all health guidelines not only for your own safety, but more especially for the safety of others. While we do not fear death, neither do we encourage it. With an overabundance of care, please continue to be mindful of those who are especially vulnerable. Love desires the highest good of its object. We in this pandemic have stayed apart to keep each other healthy and well.

Thank you for reaching out to those in need, through prayer, phone calls, bible studies, Zoom, Facebook, and a myriad of other ways – you are part of the family of Christ, and in the name of Christ, you have made a difference.

Looking forward, I urge all people to get vaccinated if they can. If you don’t wish to be vaccinated to protect yourself, please get vaccinated to help protect your neighbour. Also, continue to follow all provincial health protocols.

After thorough review and consultation, I am open to having in-person worship services resume when the congregation leadership has presented a plan to me of how they will follow all provincial health guidelines and keep themselves and any visitors safe, and I have explicitly (via email or letter) approved such plan. This plan must be in keeping with all provincial health guidelines. Note that if circumstances warrant, I am also open to re-suspending services for a congregation, parish, or the diocese as necessary. It is imperative that caution and safety are taken into account.

If the congregation is presently having online services, from a pastoral point of view it would be great for you to continue online services (if feasible) even after opening in-person worship services, to reach out to those who do not join in person. If not feasible, please include in your plan that you will point former on-line attendees to the diocesan facebook page, website, or phone app, so they can join an online service being held by another parish in our diocese.

If the congregation worship leaders (clergy or lay) are unable to get a vaccine at this time, or are immunocompromised, please note that in your plan. It is my prayer that all worship leaders, as people of influence within the congregation, will get vaccinated once they are able to. If any worship leader is unable to be vaccinated or is immunocompromised, I support them in not attending the worship service in-person but delegating to another who is able to be there safely.

Please adhere to the following hygiene as part of your plan:

- 1.) All parishioners and clergy thoroughly wash their hands before attending worship. The guidance for handwashing is for at least 20 seconds: saying the Lord's Prayer once while washing is about the right length of time.
- 2.) Instead of passing the plate during the Offertory, place your tithes and offerings into a plate at the entrance, which can then be brought up to the altar.
- 3.) During the peace, instead of shaking hands or physical contact you can wave, smile, or bow. Please remember to pass the peace verbally! You are in effect praying for Christ's shalom to be part of the life of the recipient.
- 4.) When entering or leaving worship, greet each other verbally instead of shaking hands.
- 5.) Use hand sanitizer. Remember however, while these are excellent for bacteria, they do not get rid of all viruses – washing of hands with soap and water is still required. Have hand sanitizer available to people as they come up for Communion. If you have to choose between washing with soap and water and hand sanitizer, washing with soap and water is more effective generally.
- 6.) Though The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported there has never been a known outbreak of infection related to the common communion cup,ⁱ as there is still a theoretical possibility, especially for the immunocompromised,ⁱⁱ for the immediate duration I am taking the approach of the Church of England.ⁱⁱⁱ The presider will take bread, and may take wine as well. The wine will not be shared with others, but bread only. The presider shall re-sanitize his or her hands, put on gloves, and drop the wafer into the hands of

the communicant without touching them. Other than when ingesting the communion, all participants shall be masked.

- 7.) As discussed in my letter of April 7, 2020, the preferred option of receiving Holy Eucharist is as a gathered community. The second option is as Reserved Sacrament. The third option, for those who are unable to physically receive (in this case, participants who are having communion virtually and do not have reserved sacrament at hand), the presider may say the following prayers before communion is completed, or prayer(s) of like intent:

“For those who are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: reflecting that you are aware that Christ died for you and does eagerly forgive you your sins when you earnestly confess them and, remembering how through faith in His death and resurrection you have obtained entrance into His everlasting kingdom; may our Lord God, perfect in love, mercy and righteousness, through the power of His incarnation, death, and resurrection, fill you with His presence. May you have true communion with Him, so you may love Him with all your being, love your neighbor as you love yourself, and may you never be separated from Him. In the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.”

“For those who are not baptized: May the blessing of God Almighty, Father Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always. May you come to know true communion with Him, in His death and resurrection, for the Kingdom of God has come near to you. Amen.”

- 8.) Use only fortified altar wine, of at least 18% alcohol. For our Ecumenical Ministry sites, please confer with your respective authority (Lutheran or United) for their guidance regarding grape juice – individual cups may be used for grape juice (note this is for ecumenical sites only).
- 9.) Disinfect all doorknobs, altar rails, pews and toys after each service. To disinfect plush toys, they must be laundered in a washing machine with hot water and dried in a clothes dryer on a hot cycle – so you may just wish to remove them for the time being.

Keep track of all attendees and follow all current Alberta Health Services guidelines and recommendations.

Also include the following in your plan to react if, somehow, covid is experienced at your worship gathering:

- 1.) Immediately quarantine the church building for two weeks. Quarantine yourselves as well and recommend to parishioners that they do the same.
- 2.) Ensure Alberta Health Services (AHS) is notified. Share with them the attendance list from the service in question, and the practices which had been put in place (distancing, masks, etc.).
- 3.) Notify me.

- 4.) Clean all surfaces before resuming (as per approved guideline), with a basic bleach mixture or cleaning product. If there are allergies or problems with bleach, isopropyl alcohol or hydrogen peroxide may be used. Please be careful with all these products and follow all guidelines for their usage.
- 5.) Follow all AHS communications given specifically to you.
- 6.) Resume services after documentation from me giving you explicit approval to do so.

Take all necessary precautions and be mindful of your own health. *If you feel ill, even on a Sunday morning, give notice to others and stay home. If you are responsible for leading the service in some way, pass your preparation (sermon, reading, or prayers) to someone who is not ill. If the clergy is ill, then Morning Prayer is always an option.*

You need not fear the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, or the disease that ravages at noon
(Psalm 91:6).

God bless you greatly. You are in my prayers.

In Christ's Name



David Greenwood, Bishop

- ⁱ [Risk of infectious disease transmission from a common communion cup](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9795685/)
(<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9795685/>) *Managan L., Schulster L., Chiarelo L., Simonds D.*
- ⁱⁱ [Holy Communion and Infection Transmission: A Literature Review](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7377019/)
(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7377019/>); [Covid-19 and Holy Communion](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7439816/)
(<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7439816/>)
- ⁱⁱⁱ [Covid-19 Advice on the Administration of Holy Communion](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/COVID-19%20Advice%20on%20the%20Administration%20of%20Holy%20Communion%20v5.3.pdf)
<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/COVID-19%20Advice%20on%20the%20Administration%20of%20Holy%20Communion%20v5.3.pdf>