



# *Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador*

## *The Anglican Church of Canada*

The Right Reverend Dr. Geoff Peddle, M.Div., Ph.D.  
Bishop of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

ANGLICAN DIOCESAN CENTRE  
19 King's Bridge Road  
St. John's, NL A1C 3K4  
Telephone: (709) 576-6697  
Fax: (709) 576-7122  
Email: [geoffpeddle48@gmail.com](mailto:geoffpeddle48@gmail.com)

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Dear Friends,

Last week I issued a letter regarding the current Covid-19 Pandemic and provided guidelines around public worship and other gatherings in our churches that included restrictions on sharing the common cup and other forms of contact such as shaking hands. Since then, matters have evolved rapidly and I have consulted with the Cathedral Chapter and our Diocesan Medical Officer, Dr. Stephen Major. After reviewing the latest news and noting the closures of schools and other public buildings and restrictions on visitors to many institutions, I have decided that it is appropriate for us to take additional measures as a church. All decisions taken by me and by the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador are based upon the best evidence available right now. I am extremely concerned for those who have been identified as being at greater risk due to age and other health considerations.

I hereby direct that Church Services and public gatherings in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador cease as of this day until further notice. All previously scheduled liturgies and celebrations are to be rescheduled to a later date after our diocesan life resumes its normal pace. All members of our clergy and other pastoral leaders including our Synod Office Staff will continue with their duties of care and leadership from their offices and utilize telephones and other methods of communication like e-mail as fully as possible. I ask that we enhance our online presence, including worship and prayer, at least until the present pandemic passes. Likewise, all meetings, where possible, should be conducted by electronic means. Funerals may be held and ministry to the dying and their families should be maintained, but it is expected that as far as possible such celebrations of life should include only the immediate family.

In all that we do these days, whether as part of our churches or in our communities, we should be aware of the guidelines around handwashing and “social distancing” – maintaining appropriate space between persons. There are workshops on Covid-19 available for health-care workers and pastoral visitors and I request that all who share in ministry ensure that they are fully educated on this matter. I ask that everyone follow all guidelines from our medical authorities in order to protect themselves and others.

This coming Sunday, March 22, at 11 a.m. I will gather at our Cathedral of St. John the Baptist with a few members of our Cathedral Chapter to celebrate the Holy Eucharist on behalf of our Diocese. This service will be livestreamed from our Diocesan Facebook Page - [www.facebook.com/AnglicanEastNL/](https://www.facebook.com/AnglicanEastNL/) - for all who wish to join in online as a church family during this time of special need and concern. I end with this prayer from “Occasional Services for the Assembly,” a liturgical resource of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada:

***Almighty and merciful God, you are the only source of health and healing; you alone can bring calmness and peace. Grant to us, your children, a consciousness of your presence, and a strong confidence in your love. In our pain, our weariness, and our anxiety, surround us with your care, protect us by your loving might, and permit us once more to enjoy health and strength and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.***

With my every blessing,  
+Geoffrey