



ANGLICAN EAST NL

2nd COVID19 Update – February 11, 2021

My dear Friends,

Today is February 11, 2021 and this is an update to the Diocese regarding the most recent COVID-19 news conference. Based on today's Provincial Chief Medical Officer's comments that there is a possibility that the St. John's Metro COVID outbreak might have extended to other parts of the Avalon Peninsula, I want to inform the Diocese that as of midnight tonight all Church Buildings and Properties within the Archdeaconry of Avalon and the Archdeaconry of Trinity-Conception-Placentia, will close and not be accessible to the public until further notice. This means that all Anglican Parishes and churches on the Avalon portion of the Eastern Diocese will be closed for regular public worship. The parishes and churches of the Archdeaconry of Labrador are not affected by this closure at this current time.

The only exceptions to this closure are as follows:

1. To live stream or record worship services. The people present should only be those necessary to conduct the live stream or recording and must not exceed 10 people in total. No singing is permitted within the church building (including soloists), although pre-recorded singing is permitted. The use of wind instruments is not permitted. The Chief Medical officer has prohibited in-person gatherings of which singing, or the playing of wind instruments is involved. This means that we, likewise, must eliminate singing or the use of wind instruments during in-person gatherings. For the live-streaming of the Holy Eucharist, the priest presiding over the consecration of the elements is the only person permitted to consume. Eucharist may not be administered to those in attendance. Physical distancing between people must be maintained at all times. The Act of Spiritual Communion is encouraged to be included in such livestream services. Of course, the Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer can be offered online in the place of the Eucharist for the time being.

2. Funerals and Weddings may take place. These in-person gatherings are restricted to 10 people in total. No singing is permitted (including Soloists). The Chief Medical officer has prohibited in-person gatherings of which singing, or the playing of wind instruments

is involved. Administering the Eucharist, or any other liturgical action that compromises physical distancing between people, is not permitted. People must be seated according to their household. Physical distancing must be maintained at all times during the gathering.

3. The use or rental of our church buildings by Individuals, Entities, Organizations, or Businesses is restricted to Provincially licensed Day Care Providers and/or Elections NL only at this current time.

4. Church Offices must close, yet may remain accessible to those requiring access in order to perform functions essential to the continued operation of the Church. In instances of which access is required, arrangements should be made to ensure the Office is only accessed by one individual at any given time. Stewardship and financial support for parishes should be made safe for parishioners. Electronic means of stewardship via E-giving or providing a safe and secure system for bringing their offerings via drop box should be encouraged.

In light of the record number of positive cases emerging from this situation, and the concern expressed by the Chief Medical Officer of the possibility that this outbreak may not be contained within the Metro Region alone, coupled with the knowledge that this particular outbreak of the virus is characterized by mild/asymptomatic transmission, it is necessary to institute these new restrictions so as to ensure all possible actions are taken to protect our communities. As our Clergy, Lay Leadership, and Congregations are predominantly members of the vulnerable population, we must be proactive in our efforts to keep everyone safe and well in so far as is possible. It is our moral and ethical responsibility, as a church, as the people of God, to do nothing less.

As I said only two days ago, although the Chief Medical Officer has not ordered churches to close, however, I believe that this response is necessary at this time. Doing so will ensure our communities remain protected as much as possible, and will give Health Officials the time and space to do what they need to do. The Diocese will continue to monitor the situation, remain in consultation with Public Health, and adjust our response as required. The situation continues to change rapidly, moment by moment, and our response must be the same. I ask all Clergy and Lay Leaders within our Parishes to remain informed and diligent in this regard.

As a parent of teenagers who are worried about this outbreak in our schools, and who have friends who have contracted the Coronavirus, it is important to be calm and supportive of our young people. Although we are in a time of high anxiety, it is important to listen to our children and speak with love and compassion when they might ask difficult questions for when we do, we are speaking to Jesus Himself. Remember the 18th Chapter of the Gospel of Matthew which says, "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child,

whom he put among them, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

This evening we pray for all those who have contracted COVID and those families and caregivers doing what they can to care and support their loved ones. I offer this prayer for all those in great anxiety and worry this evening:

Loving God,
Help us
to focus on what we have
not on what is removed or changed.
Strengthen us
when we feel discouraged
or overwhelmed.
Embrace us
so that we know your loving presence
within us and among us.
Walk with us
as we bring your love,
and carry your light,
into our world.
Amen.

- *Bishop Sam Rose*
- *Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland & Labrador*