



# The Diocese of Rupert's Land

The Right Reverend Geoffrey Woodcroft  
Bishop of Rupert's Land

## A Safe Return to In-person Worship

*To all Corporations, Parish COVID Response Teams, Vestries and Parish Councils,  
of the Diocese of Rupert's Land*

The Government of the Province of **Manitoba** has relaxed its restriction on in-person worship commencing February 14, 2021. The government will permit 10% of building capacity or 50 persons, whichever is less to worship in person, and following your local public health regulations and protocols.

These protocols include:

- frequent washing of hands, and face if necessary
- wearing of masks at all times
- 2m physical distancing for all participants (household bubbles need not distance from one another)
- a written record of all in attendance with contact information
- no person is permitted to attend if they have: been out of province within the last 14 days, are feeling unwell, or have had contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID 19

**Ontario** is still under lockdown for another week. Another announcement will be made by Feb. 16<sup>th</sup>, I encourage parishes to employ caution for risk reduction while meeting in less restricted numbers. Currently, weddings, funerals and other religious services, rites or ceremonies where physical distancing can be maintained:

- 10 people indoors
- 10 people outdoors

Drive-in services, rites or ceremonies permitted, subject to certain conditions.

### **Safe In-person Worship**

Corporations, Parish COVID Response Teams, Vestries and Parish Councils hold the responsibility to safely lift the suspension of in-person worship, or to safely continue with the suspension of in-person worship.

No parish must engage in-person worship.

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In addition to provincial government and local health authority listed above, Parishes moving toward in-person worship shall adhere to the Diocesan protocols and best practices:

- cleaning and sanitization of worship travel paths and seating before and after worship
- 2m physical distancing for all participants (household bubbles need not distance from one another)
- Eucharist shared in bread only
- Baptism, anointing and the laying on of hands are not permitted at this time
- wherever and whenever possible work to reduce risk for others and yourself
- encourage those not attending due to pre-existing health conditions or predisposed vulnerability to COVID 19 by continuing regular communication, including prayer and building-up in the Body of Christ.
- choral, group and participant singing remains prohibited for now (a masked soloist is permitted)

Parishes have learned so very much through these extraordinary days; hold those teachings, and the wisdom gleaned through them, closely and securely. We have grown through the troubled times, Elijah, Jonah, Paul and Jesus have illustrated in scripture, and we have seen this in our common life. Technology has been a huge learning curve for many of us, yet I think that our fear of technology may have been the greater hurdle we jumped. How to function as Church during our strange journey has certainly been a great learning experience for us all; but being a forgiving and reconciling Body has brought new and significant insight to lay and clergy alike.

We are not finished with this COVID 19 beast yet, we are, however, filled with adaptability and resilience, showing that some days our best has been more than enough. Let us continue to shine light in this world.

*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'*



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