

Ministry, Pastoral Care and Worship Guidelines Version 8.0 May 13, 2020

The provision of ministry, pastoral care and worship is an essential function of the Church, especially in times of crisis and illness. Healthy spacing (physical distancing) measures enacted to limit the spread of COVID-19 require new and adaptive practices to be deployed, however, ministry, pastoral care and worship continue to be a priority of all clergy and lay leaders of the diocese.

Guiding Principles

- Strictly adhere to all federal, provincial, municipal and diocesan directives and recommendations with regards to healthy spacing measures, self-isolation procedures, and/or health hygiene.
- Remain at home unless it is necessary to leave your home.
- Vulnerable people for whom there is an increased risk of more severe outcomes should refrain from engaging in ministry beyond their home and delegate responsibilities to others as required. This includes those who are aged 65 and over; with compromised immune systems; and with underlying medical conditions.

Building and General Ministry Guidelines

- Until further notice, church buildings are to remain closed.
- Occasional and time-limited access to the buildings is only permitted in the following circumstances: For designated persons to conduct a weekly inspection of the building; For staff to perform essential functions that could not otherwise be completed from home; For staff and volunteers to provide essential services to those who live in poverty, are food insecure, and/or precariously housed, following the directions of public health officials to mitigate risk, And for a worship leader, musician, reader/prayer and video operator to livestream services.
- Incoming mail should be deposited in a bin or box and not handled for a minimum of three to four days.
- Community gardens may be operated in compliance with advice, recommendations and instructions of public health officials, including in respect of healthy spacing, cleaning and disinfecting.
- Until further notice, diocesan cemeteries should remain closed except in the following circumstances: For graveside services and interments with a maximum of ten people plus funeral staff in attendance maintaining healthy spacing and hygiene measures; And for essential safety including grass cutting and monument stabilization.

Pastoral Guidelines

- In person visits, regardless of any circumstances and location, are not to occur until further notice.
- Clergy should undertake pastoral care by phone calls and video connections.

Enhance Communication

- Clergy and Churchwardens should implement a parish plan for regular communication with parishioners, by phone, email, social media, and/or other remote means.
- Pastoral visiting teams should now make their visits by phone, prioritizing those who may not have family or friends to check in on them.
- Clergy and Churchwardens should send regular emails to parish lists which include prayer resources and spiritual encouragement.
- Share pastoral care contact information widely so that those in need of care know how to connect with clergy without visiting the church.

Worship Guidelines

The Eucharist

- The Bishop directs priests to fast from the celebration of the Eucharist during this time when the community of the faithful are not able to be gathered and instead feast on the Word.
- Online or live streamed services are to be liturgies of the Word.
- A final Eucharistic meal to the dying may not be permissible because of extreme illness or any other just impediment. The COVID-19 pandemic is the current, serious and just impediment. If a person is repentant, believe that Christ died for them, and is grateful, then the person is in spiritual communion despite not partaking of consecrated bread and wine. This aligns with the rubric on page 584 of the 1962 Book of Common Prayer.

Pastoral Offices

- Baptisms, funerals, graveside interments, weddings and nuptial blessings should be postponed until further notice. However, should it be pastorally imperative, permission should be sought from the Bishop, the Territorial Archdeacon or the Archdeacon of Ministry and Program, in order to conduct a service for which extraordinary pastoral circumstances are such that postponing the service is not possible. If permission is granted, such services are to be held in private and in such a way as the number of those gathered is kept to five or less.
- A wedding liturgy will be a service of the Word and there is to be no reception at the church.
- A funeral liturgy will be a service of the Word and there is to be no reception at the church. For more information, see <https://thebao.ca/more-qsas/> of the Bereavement Authority of Ontario.
- Encourage the possibility of a public gathering at some later date when the COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted.

Livestreaming Worship Services

- Where parish livestreamed services are established, a weekly worship service is permitted to be conducted in the church building, provided only a worship leader, musician, reader/prayer and video operator gather. A minimum of two metres of healthy spacing must be observed during the production of services of worship, all proper hygienic protocols are observed and enhanced practices including the disinfecting of all microphones and other equipment is required.

- While this is an unprecedented time, innovative and adaptive forms of worship are happening in our churches. If livestreamed worship services are offered, you are encouraged to keep track of these so that information may be recorded in parish vestry books, as and when it may be done (not expected each week), for the historical record of this time and the response of parishes. It is encouraged that the number of viewers be added and note in the comments section which social media platform was used.

Home Prayers

- Because we are to remain home during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bishop commends to you an opportunity for daily home prayers, centred around a meal, and suggests the following as worship resources:
- Home Prayers (Book of Alternative Services, page 687)
- Forms of Prayers To Be Used in Families (Book of Common Prayer, page 728)
- An Agape – Iona 2007 – John Davies
- Spiritual Communion When Unable to Attend a celebration of Holy Communion: A liturgy to be said at home or with family (Diocese of Niagara)
- Prayers for Community in a Time of Pandemic (Corrymeela Community)