



Hello Brothers and Sisters,

With the re-launching of various sectors of the community here in Alberta we now find ourselves in phase two of our diocesan plan for Meeting Together Again. We have worked very closely with the Government Guidelines, following the advice of our Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Deena Hinshaw, to provide clarity on what we can and cannot do in the days ahead.

Every parish has been asked to provide a re-gathering plan, and parishes will only be allowed to open if those plans are approved and show compliance with the government and diocesan guidelines. Our main goal is to continue to keep everybody as safe as we can during this process. You can read our guidelines and more detailed plans on our diocesan website edmonton.anglican.ca.

I would like to highlight some important dates. Parishes can now ask for permission to gather in person for worship from June 15th. However, I anticipate that not all parishes will pick the same dates to open. We may see dates through July, or August or September proposed for opening. Please be patient while we put in place all our risk mitigation protocols.

Public worship services will be 50 people or less, as is defined by the government guidelines, and also enable physical distancing in sanctuaries. Not every church has the space to maintain physical distancing for 50 people. If your parish is opening a little later than others, I would ask you not to go to a different parish for worship as everyone will be trying hard to work with their own congregations at this time.

There are things that will be missing from our worship together for the foreseeable future. And, *yet*, we know that the ability for people to gather in worship in person and to share in the sacraments will be a blessing for many parishioners.

I am also deeply aware of the challenges ahead for all of us. There are many things we are used to doing when we gather together, that are not permissible right now. For example:

- We cannot sing, or embrace;
- We must be physically distanced;
- We cannot offer children's or youth programming, and we must gather in smaller groups;
- Our liturgies for Holy Eucharist will be different;
- Only members from the same physical household will be allowed to sit together;
- There will be seating plans for the sanctuary for physical distancing;
- There will be no social gatherings like in-person coffee hours or parish meals;
- You will be asked to fill in the AHS self-assessment health questionnaire, either online or at the door of the church. If you are ill, we will ask you to stay home.

As you can see, this is not a return to what was before, but offers a way to receive the Holy Sacraments and take part in corporate worship in person. I should remind you that if a member of the congregation tests positive for COVID-19 in the days following worship, the others present will be asked to return to a 14-day quarantine and the church may have to return to virtual worship during that period.

We will have to show extraordinary grace to one another. We will all have friends and family members who have different views on reopening, and who either want to move faster or slower in returning to a more normal life. We tread a fine line in deciding when to reopen and as your Bishop I am deeply aware of the risks involved whenever we open our church buildings.

For those of you wondering why we don't wait until the second wave has passed, I have to say, it could be 2021 before this happens, or until a vaccine for COVID-19 is developed, if that is even possible. We can never be 100% sure that someone in the congregation has not, or will not, contract the virus. For those of you who want to know why we are not opening this Sunday, I have to say, parishes do not yet have plans in place and I will not approve the re-opening of a building unless I am convinced supplies and protocols are in place and that clergy and volunteers are trained and ready.

If you decide you wish to return to worship in the church building, please take the utmost care. Follow all the guidelines we have been given. Stay at home if you are sick, or if you have underlying health issues that would make you susceptible to a very serious infection with COVID-19. If you decide that you are not ready at this time to return to in-person worship in the church building, please know I respect and uphold your decision, and we will continue to reach out with worship, pastoral care and study opportunities.

Most of the clergy have indicated they will be continuing with live-streamed worship and this is now part of the normal life of our churches. I thank God for all of you who have helped or participated in worship this way, and that the work of the Kingdom has continued uninterrupted. Thank you so much for everything.

If we act as the body and follow all suggested precautions for the good of our neighbour, then I believe we can reopen gradually and safely.

In Christ
+Jane

We are not people of fear: we are people of courage.
We are not people who protect our own safety:
we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.
We are not people of greed: we are people of generosity.
We are your people God,
giving and loving,
wherever we are,
whatever it costs
For as long as it takes
wherever you call us. AMEN