

Hello and welcome to a special COVID Communiqué

We said in our last Communiqué that with COVID everything can change, often on short notice. To no one's surprise, that's happened: Omicron is spreading exponentially and hard as it is to say, churches **within the City of Ottawa** will return to modified Red protocols as of Monday, December 20. The entire diocese will move to modified Red as of noon on Christmas Day. (You'll find a list of newly modified Red protocols below. More details will follow in Wednesday's Communiqué).

Any church in our diocese can decide to cancel in-person services immediately. You know your parish's context best, and must do what's right for your people. However, if you decide to keep your church open for in-person worship until Red protocols come into full force (Monday Dec 20 for City of Ottawa and noon on Christmas Day for the remainder of our diocese), you must take these extra steps to keep people as safe as possible:

- No congregational singing is allowed.
- Reintroduce physical distancing of two metres in all directions between people not in the same household bubble. Capacity cannot exceed 50 per cent.
- All safety measures must be carefully observed: people must wear well-fitting masks, sanitize their hands, maintain physical distance at all times and leave the church directly when the service is done.
- Sharing the Eucharist is still permitted but people must maintain physical distancing while approaching and leaving the sanctuary and wear masks except while taking communion.
- Staff should be encouraged to work from home whenever possible.

Everyone will already be wondering what's going to happen, so please get the word about these changes out as fast as possible, before Sunday if you can. Post the news on your website and social media, send an email, put something on your outdoor sign, phone people if necessary.

This sudden change in plans may make it difficult for parishes to provide online worship on Christmas Eve. It may help you to know that Wednesday's communique will provide details

about an online Christmas Eve choral liturgy from Christ Church Cathedral at which Bishop Shane Parker will give a pastoral message, and Dean Beth Bretzlaff will preach.

Meanwhile, here's a quick list of Revised Red protocols:

- Everyone involved in services must be double vaccinated
- Eucharist is permitted in both kinds
- Up to 25 participants (only people with active roles)—including choirs and musicians.
- Singers, musicians and choirs must be distanced and masked.
- If there is more than one person in the space all persons must be masked—if live-streaming or recording alone you are allowed to take off your mask.
- Staff shall work from home where possible.
- No social times or sharing of food
- Weddings and funerals can proceed with permission from the COVID Help Desk.

The rapid rise of the Omicron variant has created uncertainty and fear, and people are exhausted, frustrated, and sad that we cannot have the Christmas we had all been counting on. Let's do everything we can to keep everyone safe, give comfort and reassurance, and let the Christmas message of God's great love reach through and bring joy to us all.

If you have questions about these changes, please send them to us at:

C19helpdesk@ottawa.anglican.ca.

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