

A Message from Algoma's Diocesan Archdeacon re: Pandemic Protocols

Monday, August 30, 2021.

Greetings! Siblings in Christ:

I write to you concerning two matters related to our diocesan response to the COVID-19 pandemic. First, I will speak to the protocols currently in place. Second, I will say a word about our existing policy around the participation of unvaccinated individuals in the life of the church.

Diocesan Protocols

On August 17, Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Kieran Moore announced the Ontario government was hitting the pause button on lifting the remaining pandemic restrictions. This decision was prompted by the increase in COVID cases across the province, particularly those arising from the spread of the more contagious 'Delta' variant, and the imminent return of teachers and students to classrooms in the coming weeks.

In light of this decision, we determined the best course of action for the Diocese of Algoma was to refrain from making any significant changes to our current protocols at this time. We believe it is prudent to see how things progress over the next few weeks across the Diocese and in the province overall before considering any substantial modifications.

However, we are posting an updated document addressing fundraisers in Algoma that outlines some revisions to our policy. Specifically, yard sales and the reopening of thrift stores are permitted within the following parameters:

- For workers, masks must be worn, two metre physical distancing maintained at all times between individuals or social bubbles, and frequent hand hygiene practiced after handling money or items used by others. It is strongly recommended that workers be fully vaccinated.
- A maximum of five patrons is allowed for indoor thrift stores, provided they are masked, and can maintain a minimum of two metre physical distancing at all times. A contact log sheet must be kept and stored in a secure location for thirty days. Hand sanitizer should be available to patrons at the entrance and exit from the space.
- As always, if our protocols and the regulations of the province or local health unit differ, the more cautious guidelines must be observed.

As we move through September, we will monitor the situation in our congregations, the regions within our diocese, and the province overall to determine if we can

loosen other restrictions, including those touching upon the worship life of our church.

Diocesan Policy re: Non-Vaccinated Persons

At this time, the Diocese does not require people to provide any proof of vaccination, or to stay away from worship if they are not fully vaccinated. Therefore, it is not appropriate for congregations to make either of these conditions a requirement at this time. However, it is always appropriate to respectfully encourage people, particularly those in leadership or working with vulnerable persons, to become fully vaccinated if they have not already done so, unless vaccination is contra-indicated medically.

The above being said, we are aware that many organizations are mandating vaccinations. Therefore, Archbishop Anne is in conversation with the Provincial House of Bishops, the Provincial Chancellor, the chancellors and Executive Officers of Ontario's dioceses, and our epidemiological consultant, The Rev. Michael Garner about this matter. The question is being addressed, first of all, as it touches upon church employees and those in positions of responsibility on behalf of the church, and secondly as it may pertain to any participation in church events and those housed in our buildings.

Once again, thank you for your ongoing love of neighbour demonstrated in faithfully observing our Diocesan protocols!

In Christ,
Jay Koyle,
Diocesan Archdeacon and Executive Officer