



# The Diocese of Rupert's Land

The Right Reverend Geoffrey Woodcroft

Bishop of Rupert's Land

September 28, 2020

Dear Disciple Leaders,

Through these extraordinary days you have answered the call to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 through and by our Christian activity, and you have poured heart, soul, mind, and strength into proclaiming the kingdom in new and vital ways. The Body of Christ has not slept through this pandemic, but has been ever-vigilant to hear God's call to mission. Resiliency, adaptability, and fluidity of thoughtful/prayerful conversation are ways I like to describe the present Church.

Our Provincial Government has *this day* called upon the citizens of Winnipeg, and the surrounding areas of Cartier, Headingley, Macdonald, Ritchot, Rockwood, Rosser, Springfield, St. Andrews, St. Clements, St. François Xavier, Taché, West St. Paul and East St. Paul to be more responsible in reducing the risk of COVID-19, and flattening the curve, to make our communities safe again. We support our gov't in this task, and we posture ourselves in the Body to make that happen effectively and with as little disturbance as possible.

Presently, our protocols for worship are acceptable and affirmed by government standards:

1. Attendance is permitted at 30% of worship space capacity, provided that physical distance between participants is *no less* than 2 metres.
2. A *maximum* of 10 participants for non-worship gatherings, meetings, weddings and funerals.
3. Baptisms and anointing/laying on of hands will remain in suspension at least until code Orange has been lifted.
4. Masks are mandatory for all participants while attending all Church related events.
5. Celebrations of the Eucharist may continue with renewed vigilance for risk reduction. I understand that the removal of a mask to share communion may in fact increase the risk of spreading disease. I also understand that parish communities across the diocese have put much research, thought, and effort into their reopening plans, and I encourage our leaders to share their best practices with one another, and their new methods of sharing communion,
6. There remains no congregational singing. However, a soloist, *appropriately distanced from others*, is still acceptable. Musical ensembles are permitted, provided they are *appropriately socially distanced* and they don't include instruments dependent on human breath.
7. Each community discerns for itself whether or not to facilitate corporate worship, including the number of participants, and the administering of the Eucharist.

It is important that we continue to be in regular contact with the disciples of our parishes, visiting, emailing, calling and using facetime wherever possible and safely. Encouraging our people to minister to the best of their abilities, proclaiming the kingdom is near, reaching out of our lament to encourage our neighbours, it is that for which we have been called. An excellent read for our situation is N.T. Wright's *God and the Pandemic*, a short but powerful book.

May God continue to pour abundant blessings upon you, and all whom you love.

In Christ,

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