

# Important Message from Bishop Sam Rose

February 9, 2021

Dear Friends,

Today, February 9, 2021, we received information from our Provincial Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Janice Fitzgerald, that we now have community spread of the Coronavirus in the St. John's Metro Area.

In light of these recent developments, I am announcing that all in-person gatherings within Church Buildings and properties in the Archdeaconry of Avalon, are to be suspended effective midnight tonight.

More specifically, in-person gatherings are suspended for the following parishes and congregations:

- The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist
- St. Thomas'
- St. Mark's
- St. Augustine's
- St. Mary the Virgin and St. Peter on the Rock
- St. Michael and All Angels
- St. Paul's, Goulds
- Pastoral Unit of Petty Harbour, Bay Bulls, Aquaforte
- The Church of the Ascension
- The Church of the Good Shepherd
- St. Nicholas, Torbay
- All Saint's, Pouch Cove
- St. Lawrence
- Bell Island
- St. Philip's
- Holy Innocents
- St. John the Evangelist
- All Saints, Conception Bay South
- St. Peter's

All in-person gatherings for worship, be it on Sunday or any other day of the week, will now cease in these parishes for the time being. Worship should be offered online, if possible, with the minimum number of persons to assist.

Funerals, weddings, or other pastoral situations that require physical, in-person gathering may proceed, yet are restricted to 20 people in total, with all persons maintaining physical distancing at all times. Sharing in the Eucharist, and other liturgical actions that will compromise physical distancing, must not occur within any of these gatherings. Congregational singing is also not permitted.

Other in-person gatherings that take place, such as Sunday School, Bible study, ACW, Men's fellowship, Vestry Meetings, will also cease until further notice. These meetings and gatherings, where possible, should be offered online.

Community Groups and/or Commercial businesses that use these buildings, such as daycares and after-school programs, may continue to operate according to the public health directives and orders outlined by the Chief Medical Officer.

Groups, such as CLB and Girl Guides; sport and recreation activities, such as martial arts; group arts and cultural activities, such as dance studios and choirs and bands; have all been ordered to cease operations by the Chief Medical Officer. Such groups and commercial renters falling within these categories are not permitted to use the church buildings within these parishes until further notice.

These restrictions are now in effect for all parishes and congregations within the Archdeaconry of Avalon as this is the geographic source of the recent outbreak. Although these guidelines do not apply to the Archdeaconries of Trinity/Conception/Placentia, and Labrador, that can change at any moment. The current outbreak being experienced within the St. John's/Metor area can happen anywhere within our province at any time. It is so important now that we do not be complacent, and that we do everything necessary, as directed by Public Health Authorities, to keep everyone safe. I encourage all parishes to continue to review our Many Members, One Body document and to ensure that current practice is fully in line with its COVID-19 guidelines.

I have complete confidence in our Public Health Officials to navigate us through this challenging time, yet, we must do our part as well. Although the Chief Medical Officer has not ordered churches to close, I believe this response is

necessary at this time. Doing so will ensure our communities remain protected as much as possible, and will give Health Officials the time and space to do what they need to do. The Diocese will continue to monitor the situation, remain in consultation with Public Health, and adjust our response as required. The situation continues to change rapidly, moment to moment, and our response must be the same. I ask all Clergy and Lay Leaders within our Parishes to remain informed and diligent in this regard.

As your Bishop, I am committed to providing safe places of worship and gathering for all people. We have been very fortunate since last Fall to be open for public worship and other activities, unlike other churches across Canada. Now that our situation has changed, we must change accordingly. I know that this has been difficult for us. I miss being able to be together as we once did. But the sacrifices we make now will ensure that we will be able to gather as the whole Church in the near future.

Until that glorious day my friends, may we continue to stand fast in faith and never lose hope in the promise that God is always with us. I ask that we pray for those directly affected by this pandemic, those awaiting test results and those front line workers in our hospitals and other healthcare facilities.

**Let us pray:**

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.

The video message of the above text is below:

<https://youtu.be/lqjIEmBvQ0s>