



ANGLICAN DIOCESE MONTREAL

The Right Reverend Mary Irwin-Gibson
Bishop of Montreal
bishops.office@montreal.anglican.ca

January 10, 2022

Dear Colleagues and friends in Christ,

As I write to you, the hospitals in Quebec are overloaded with cases of Covid-19 and are reaching a new crisis level. Many of you have had family members and parishioners contract the highly contagious Omicron variant of the virus. Thankfully, those who have been vaccinated are mostly suffering comparatively mild symptoms. It is important to continue to exercise great caution even if we are fully vaccinated. Please know that I am praying for you all and am glad to offer specific prayers if you are in touch with me. I will send out a Bishop's Announcements with other news after I meet with Episcopal Council and Diocesan Council tomorrow.

Here is an **update and clarifications** about the current Government of Quebec Public Health rules for churches. Some of you have already been in touch with our office about other questions you had. I'll include that information for you as well.

Indoor worship services held inside church buildings remain suspended until further notice. However, a small number of people is permitted inside a church building for the purposes of broadcasting or recording a liturgy, including **a soloist but not a choir**. Some exceptions have also been made for funerals, which are outlined below.

Outdoor services may be held outdoors, so long as all participants are wearing masks and remain at least one metre apart. A maximum of 250 is permitted.

In-person pastoral visits are prohibited and pastoral visiting should be done online or over the telephone. **In cases of extreme necessity or emergency** where a visit to a hospital or residence is needed, such visits are to be carried out following the directives of the particular institution you are visiting – taking all precautions possible to avoid transmission of the virus.

Emergency pastoral visits by licensed clergy and lay readers are permitted **during curfew**, so long as the individual making the emergency visit carries authorization that can be shown to law enforcement officers. If you require such a letter, please contact me directly at bishops.office@montreal.anglican.ca.

In the case of funerals, if held indoors, a maximum of 25 people may attend a funeral, not including clergy, volunteers, or funeral home personnel. If next of kin are receiving condolences before the funeral, a maximum of 25 people is permitted in the church building at any given time. Vaccination passports are not required, but masks must be worn at all times and physical distancing observed. If held outdoors, a maximum of 250 may attend a funeral, but masks must be worn and a distance of at least one metre must be maintained between those attending.

Weddings should be postponed until indoor worship services may resume. (Although the government web site says that they **may only be held outdoors**, with a maximum of 250 people in attendance, it seems unlikely that this would be a comfortable option. Masks should be worn and physical distancing respected. A reception may follow the wedding, but it must also be held outdoors and a maximum of 50 people may attend.)

Support groups like AA, NA etc. are considered essential services by the government and are permitted to continue to use church facilities if the corporation is able to maintain cleaning protocols and the group has signed off on the user group waiver form online dated June 16, 2020.

<https://www.montreal.anglican.ca/covid19-response>

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/measures-in-force/community-organizations>

Please make sure that your websites/Facebook sites are kept up to date and that people looking for spiritual sustenance can figure out how to be in touch with your community – at least by email. Our mission extends beyond our mailing lists!

Pray for God's grace for yourselves and for one another. We will get through this – together!

In Christ's love,

+ Mary