



## Roadmap to Reopen the Diocese of Algoma

As the government of Ontario prepares to launch its 3-step plan to cautiously and gradually reopen Ontario, the Diocese of Algoma will also cautiously and gradually reopen its Anglican Church buildings. We will achieve this reopening by aligning our COVID-19 protocols in step with the province's plan.

At this time, the Government of Ontario has determined that the reopening of the province will not be a regional approach. When they enter Step 1, it will be all of Ontario entering into Step 1. Therefore, please know that incumbents and wardens who do not feel comfortable making the decision to move into our reopening plan due to local circumstances (higher case rates, very few people vaccinated, many underlying health conditions, etc.) will be supported in their choice by Archbishop Anne Germond and Archdeacon Jay Koyle.

The following protocols and all directives of the Government of Ontario (and Quebec where applicable), and local health authorities must be followed at all times, including the foundational pandemic hygiene guidance of hand washing, staying home if feeling sick, practicing physical distancing, and wearing a face covering. If there is a discrepancy between diocesan protocols and government/local health unit protocols then **the directives that provide the most protection must be followed.**

**Church buildings will remain closed to in-person worship in Step 1 of Reopening our Churches.** Due to the extreme virulence of the Variants of Concern circulating within our diocese and the province overall, as well as the low percentage of people fully vaccinated to date, the risk of contracting COVID-19 within an enclosed worship space currently outweighs reopening to gather indoors for worship at this time. In the Algoma health unit area, for example, just 6.86% of the total population have been fully vaccinated as of May 31, 2021.

### What is in This Document

There are two steps to reopening our churches outlined in this document. It is prudent to wait until a later date before releasing protocols for Step 3 of Reopening our Churches. There are many variables at play that will determine what we may or may not be able to do together as the Church in two month's time. Be assured, you will be provided with Step 3 protocols in ample time to prepare for any changes that Step 3 of Reopening our Churches brings with it. Each step of the reopening plan will remain in

place for a **minimum of 21 days**. Our churches will move on to Step 2 of Reopening our Churches when the Ontario government moves on to Step 2 of Reopening Ontario.

Section 1a: Here you will find the protocols for “Step 1 of Reopening our Churches” which will come into effect when the province of Ontario enters Step 1 of Reopening Ontario, the target date for which is on or around June 14, 2021. Churches will be able to implement Step 1 protocols beginning on the first Sunday after the Government of Ontario announces the launch of Step 1 of the province’s reopening. For example, if the government announces the beginning of Step 1 to Reopen Ontario on June 14, 2021, then the Anglican Churches of our dioceses may implement the protocols for Step 1 of Reopening our Churches on Sunday, June 20, 2021.

Section 1b: This section outlines the exceptions to the closure of our buildings. For example, two people wearing masks and maintaining a minimum 2m of physical distance have been allowed to enter the church building in order to count the offering and prepare it for deposit in a bank.

Section 1c: More detail is provided for in-person gathering for the purpose of live-streaming and/or recording the worship service.

Section 1d: Additional detail is given regarding contactless communication with parishioners.

Section 1e: Here you will find the protocols for the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist during outdoor worship. Only the consecrated bread will be distributed to worship participants in the manner outlined.

Section 1f: This is the rationale and the rite for providing reserved sacrament, after the worship service, to **homebound individuals** and to **online worship participants** who drive to the church at a designated time.

## Section 1a

### Step 1 of Reopening our Churches: Protocols

**Effective date:** The first Sunday following the Government of Ontario implementation of Step 1 of Reopening Ontario

- Corporate worship (regular weekly worship services) continues to be live-streamed or pre-recorded and made available online.
- Outdoor worship services are permitted. Masks must be worn and a minimum of 2m (6ft) of physical distancing must be maintained between all in attendance. Only people within the same social bubble may be closer than the required distance.
- Gatherings for outdoor worship services must have a minimum of two (2) sides-people designated to ensure the maintenance of the required physical distance between worshippers.
- Church buildings are closed to the public, except in circumstances where tenants or licenses are permitted to operate according to provincial, local, and diocesan guidelines (see details in Section 1b).
- Parish meetings should take place online or via teleconference.
- Offices may reopen for staff and lay leaders where physical distancing is possible. Masks are to be worn at all times in shared spaces.
- Small weddings, funerals, and emergency baptisms are permitted (see details in Section 1b).
- Vital food security, community and other outreach ministries to vulnerable populations are permitted to operate, with appropriate diocesan/local public health approval.
- Essential one-on-one, in person pastoral care by clergy and pastoral visitors is permitted. Each area hospital, nursing home and hospice has its own guidelines. These are to be followed at all times.
- Food and beverages are not to be served or shared. If conducting an outdoor Celebration of the Holy Eucharist (distributing the bread only) please see guidelines in Section 1e. If distributing reserved sacrament (bread only) following a live-streamed/recorded service please refer to guidelines in Section 1f.
- An attendance logbook must be maintained, with contact information of all individuals entering the building or participating in allowed events on church property. Log sheets will be kept for the 30 days following the occasion.

## Section 1b

### Step 1 of Reopening our Churches: Exceptions to Building Closures

#### Church buildings are to remain closed except for the following:

- Recording or live-streaming worship
- Regular security/maintenance checks done by a single individual (or two individuals from the same household) as required by the insurance carrier.
- Tasks of clergy or parish staff that cannot be done from home. In such instances, time in the church building is to be minimized as much as possible.
- Vital outreach ministries such as those addressing food insecurity or 'Out of the Cold' programs.
- 12-step programs (maximum of 10 people/meeting)
- Counting of offerings: only two (2) persons may be present in the building to count offerings and prepare the bank deposit. Counters must wear masks and maintain physical distancing. (Remember that counters should not be from the same household.)
- Funerals with a maximum of ten (10) persons. This number does not include funeral home staff, but does include ministers such as the presider or musician. All participants must wear masks and follow physical distancing regulations. A reception is not to take place within church buildings or on church property. (*Note:* Outdoor funerals in the cemetery also allow a maximum of ten persons. However, outside of a graveside service, only a maximum of five (5) persons is allowed in the cemetery. People wear masks and follow physical distancing regulations.)
- Weddings with a maximum of ten (10) persons. This number **includes** the couple, the Officiant, and any other ministers such as soloist, organist, etc. All participants must wear masks and follow physical distancing regulations. A reception is not to take place within church buildings or on church property.

A schedule should be developed so the above activities do not overlap and sufficient time for cleaning is provided.

## Section 1c

### Step 1 of Reopening our Churches: Details for the Recording or Live-Streaming of Worship Services

#### Recording or Live-streaming Services

- Parishes are prohibited from in-person worship within the church building, except for the above-mentioned exceptions. Therefore, worship may take place via an online platform such as *Zoom*, be recorded or broadcast by incumbents or clergy from their home, or streamed or recorded in the worship space.
- Streamed and recorded services may be Prayer Office or Liturgy of the Word. If the service is to be Holy Eucharist, there must be allowance for the distribution of reserved sacrament (bread only). See Section 1e and Section 1f for guidelines.
- A maximum of ten (10) persons is permitted to be present to record or live-stream worship services, including any AV people. You are encouraged, however, to involve as few individuals as possible. While the provincial maximum allows for up to ten persons, our practice will be to follow the advice of our epidemiological consultant to reflect the general guidelines for Ontario, reducing non-household contacts as much as possible.
- **When recording or live-streaming services in which more than one person is present, masks must be worn at all times and physical distancing guidelines must be followed.** Please remember that our diocese is experiencing the spread of the Variants of Concern which are highly virulent and often produce more severe illness than the original COVID-19 virus.
- If services are recorded in segments so that more than 10 people are seen to be involved but are not present at the same time, please have that noted at the start and/or end of the recording.

## Section 1c

### Step 1 of Reopening our Churches: Contactless Communication

- Delivery of worship materials, Christian education materials, parish newsletters, etc. is permitted if done in a non-contact manner. For example, sides-people **cannot** hand out worship service bulletins or books to people arriving. These sorts of materials may be placed on individual chairs, by a person who has sanitized his/her/their hands, prior to the arrival of any worship service participants.
- Communication should be sent to parishioners informing them that the church building is closed for the present time, and that they may not drop in to the building for any reason without prior authorization from the Incumbent or Wardens.

## Section 1d

### Step 1 of Reopening our Churches: Guidelines for an Outdoor Celebration of Holy Eucharist

Face coverings/masks are to be worn at all times. Physical distancing must be maintained at all times even during necessary movement during the liturgy. Keeping the number of ministers involved in the service to a minimum is recommended. Social mingling before and after the service is not to be permitted.

- Restrictions concerning singing/congregational song in previous protocols remain in place.
- Collection plates and baskets are not to be passed person-to-person. Worshipers may deposit their offering into plates or baskets prominently placed out to receive them.
- If the offering plate is presented at the altar, the presenter should hold it during the Prayer over the Gifts. It should not be handed to a server or Presider and then handed back. \*Note: this protocol of not passing items between persons throughout the liturgy applies to all aspects of the liturgy (ex. microphones, communion vessels, incense bowls, censors, etc.).
- The Gospel Procession remains suspended unless a set location for reading the Gospel passage that allows for physical distancing is chosen and the Deacon/Gospeller wears a mask. There are no torches in the procession due to the difficulty in maintaining physical distance when walking side-by-side or illuminating the Gospel Book. If a crucifer is used, the Gospeller and crucifer must be 12 meters (13ft) apart during the reading of the Gospel. The Gospeller holds the Gospel Book.
- After the ritual dialogue for the Greeting of Peace, worshipers are not to shake hands or hug. Ritual gestures such as bowing, smiling, a bow of the head with hand over the heart, or a Namaste gesture from the place they are seated are appropriate and to be encouraged.
- Those setting up the altar must adhere to physical distancing guidelines as much as possible while preparing the worship space. Masks are to be worn. Hands must be washed well with soap and water (or sanitizer if no water is available) at the beginning of the preparation, and again immediately before touching the Eucharistic vessels if other tasks have been performed prior to setting the altar and credence table. The elements for Holy Communion are placed on or near the altar before the liturgy, **and are not to be processed during the Preparation of the Gifts.**
- The Presider must sanitize/wash hands, wear a mask, and physically distance from the table/altar so that the Great Thanksgiving is not being spoken near the elements. The bread should be shielded by a veil, the cup with a veil or pall, and ciboria with lids throughout the prayer. There is no need for the Presider to touch the elements or vessels during the Eucharistic Prayer. It is sufficient to maintain the orans posture throughout the prayer, or to also extend hands toward the elements during the epiclesis. Only the Presider may stand at the altar. All other persons must maintain physical distancing.
- A designated person will precede the Presider – or whoever is distributing the bread – in order to squirt hand sanitizer into the hands of worship participants sharing in the bread. The hand sanitizing person will also be available to sanitize the hands of the person(s) distributing the

bread in case there is accidental contact with a worshipper's hands. The precise way in which the distribution of the bread is accomplished will vary according to layout of the worship space.

- Masks must be worn throughout the service. Worshippers will displace their masks only long enough to place the bread in their mouths. This will be done **after** the distributor of the bread has moved on to the next worshipper. Worshippers will maintain the required physical distance away from other worshippers throughout the process. Social bubbles are an exception.
- Blessings during Communion must be contactless. Prayers for healing during Communion must be contactless.
- Ablutions: If someone other than the Presider performs the ablutions, under no circumstances should anyone else drink from the chalice. This may mean leaving it for the Presider after the service, the person performing the ablutions drinking from the chalice, or pouring any consecrated wine in the chalice and the first rinse of water down a piscina or directly on the ground.

## Section 1f

### Step 1 of Reopening our Churches: Administration of the Reserved Sacrament Following a Live-streamed or Pre-recorded Service

The practice of Ministry to the Sick and the sharing of the reserved sacrament with those who are shut-in/isolated serve as the basis for this rite and the protocols that accompany it.

Permission to use this rite is given to congregations of the Diocese when the province of Ontario has moved into Step 1 of Reopen Ontario (or the corresponding designation if located in Quebec). Though permission is given in these instances, the conditions reported by your local health unit should be monitored and discretion exercised if cases in the region are increasing significantly. The Incumbent of the parish determines if the option extended through this permission is exercised.

Those desiring to share Communion by means of the reserved sacrament should notify their church ahead of time. The best means and timing for doing so is at the discretion of each congregation. However, do keep in mind it is appropriate for the church to initiate calls to people who may want Communion, particularly those not online. Communicants and those in their household should be exhibiting no symptoms characteristic of COVID-19, and must not have travelled outside of the country within the previous fourteen days. Homebound recipients of the reserved sacrament do not need to participate in the broadcast of the liturgy. They should be reminded ahead of time to wear a mask as indicated in the rite below.

If the number of requests for the reserved sacrament warrants, it is recommended that at least two people participating in person be designated as Communion ministers to deliver the reserved sacrament at the close of the liturgy in addition to the Presiding Celebrant and/or otherwise designated Communion minister. An individual Communion minister should not visit more than four homes in one day. Each minister and those in their household should be exhibiting no symptoms characteristic of COVID-19, and must not have travelled outside of the country within the previous fourteen days. Other protocols for Communion ministers are found in the rubrics of the rite provided below. Those exercising this ministry should meet the requirements outlined in Algoma's Screening in Faith policy.

If numbers are too great to accommodate on a given Sunday, these requests can be accommodated on a subsequent Sunday.

The rite presumes the parish's Celebration of the Eucharist will be live streamed via a website, social media, or an online conferencing platform such as *Zoom*. If a parish pre-records their celebration, the reserved sacrament should be delivered on the Sunday the recording is made available.

An allowable expansion on the above is to arrange for people to receive the reserved sacrament in their vehicles immediately after the liturgy. If this option is exercised, it should be made clear the expectation is those receiving in their vehicles participate in the liturgy via a video-conferencing platform, such as *Zoom*, or via the online broadcast beforehand. Those to whom the reserved sacrament is delivered at



their home still do not need to participate in the online service if they do not have the means to do so. Once again, the exercise of this option is at the discretion of the Incumbent.

If this option is used, you will need to determine and do some organization around routes, as appropriate for your parking lot and/or street situation. You will also need to think through how you will prevent people from gathering and visiting at this time. One possibility to allow for some “visiting” is to have an online “coffee hour” between the end of the service and the time people depart from their homes to come for the distribution of the reserved sacrament.

The rite below will need very little adaptation to serve this latter option.

A rationale follows the rite below.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Archdeacon Jay Koyle at 705.256.5061, ext. 3 or via e-mail [congdevelopment@dioceseofalgoma.com](mailto:congdevelopment@dioceseofalgoma.com)

*Thank you to The Rev. Michael Garner, former epidemiologist at the Public Health Agency of Canada who serves currently as an epidemiological consultant to the Archbishop’s office and the Ontario House of Bishops, for his review of, and input into this document.*

### **The Rite**

*The Holy Eucharist is celebrated with at least one person in addition to the Presiding Celebrant present on site, and no more than the maximum number of in-person participants than permitted by The Reopening Our Churches Protocols and government regulations. The celebration is live streamed to allow the possibility for other parishioners to take part in the service from home.*

*Before the dismissal, the Presiding Celebrant hands the consecrated bread in appropriate vessels to the Communion minister(s), saying,*

Go forth in peace to the sick and homebound of our community, bearing the Word of God and the Bread of Life. By your presence and the holy gifts you share, remind them we are one Body in Christ the Lord.

*From the driveway or parking lot of each home, the Communion minister calls the household before sanitizing their hands and going to the door. The communicant answering the door must wear a mask.*

*The minister, masked, staying outside of the home or apartment, and keeping appropriate physical distance, says,*

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*Answer*

**And also with you.**

*The minister continues,*

The Church of Christ, of which we are members, has taken bread and wine and given thanks according to the Lord's command. We share now in the communion of his body.

*The Lord's Prayer may be prayed.*

*If there is only one person in the household receiving, the minister says,*

The body of Christ.

*Answer*        **Amen.**

*Then the minister steps forward and places the wafer in the hand of the communicant. The communicant only removes their mask after the Communion minister has physically distanced again, and only long enough to consume the consecrated bread.*

*If there is more than one communicant, sufficient bread/wafers may be left with the household for members to administer to one another, after the Communion minister leaves. The communicants administer to one another, saying,*

The body of Christ.

*Answer*        **Amen.**

*The following doxology may be prayed.*

*Minister*        Glory to God,  
*All*                **whose power, working in us,  
can do infinitely more  
than we can ask or imagine.  
Glory to God from generation to generation,  
in the Church and in Christ Jesus,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

*Before departing, the minister says,*

Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia!

*Answer*        **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

*The minister returns to their vehicle, sanitizes their hands, and moves to the next household.*

*Each Communion minister should visit no more than four homes in one day. A log should be kept of each household visited and the time of the visit.*

*For some of the people visited, the minister may be the first person outside of their "social bubble" with whom they have interacted. Though the departure need not be abrupt, the minister should take care not to linger after the sharing of Communion and should not enter the home unless the weather is inclement. In such an instance, the minister should simply step inside the door and ensure social distancing is maintained.*

*A rationale for this rite is provided below.*

### **Rationale**

*"Doing the liturgy well...means letting go of all those habits that make liturgy look like an object, a thing, rather than our action, our celebration of what our lives mean when joined to Christ."*

*~ Robert Hovda*

In many ways, the Liturgical Movement of the twentieth century was successful in its effort of returning the Holy Eucharist to its central place in our observance of the Lord's Day. However, over the initial months of closed buildings during the COVID-19 pandemic, it became apparent that an essential aspiration of the movement's desired renewal remains unrealized. Far too many communicants fail to recognize something foundational to our identity and mission as church: the Body of Christ is not only on the Table; it is also around the Table.

Approximately 1600 years ago, St. Augustine of Hippo delivered a particular sermon during the Easter octave speaking to this aspect of the church's reality. Fresh in the minds of the newly baptized present for the homily was their experience of the Great Vigil of Easter, the nightlong event during which they passed through the font's waters, finally taking their place at the Eucharistic table as the sun peeked over the horizon on Easter morning. It was the culmination of what, for most of them, was three years of preparation, months when they were immersed in the stories and practices of Christian faith.

In the sermon, Augustine pointed to the bread on the altar and proclaimed, "We call that the body of Christ." Then gesturing toward the congregation, he continued, "Yet the Apostle Paul calls *you* the body of Christ. So it is your own mystery you see on the table. It is your own mystery you receive when you come forward. When you take the bread in your hands and answer 'Amen' to the words, 'The body of Christ,' you say amen to what you are. So," he exhorted, "live as Christ's body that your 'amen' may be true." (*Sermon 272*)

The notion would not have come as a shock to those assembled before Augustine. They would have been formed in teaching and activity to grow into this self-understanding.

It is important that our Eucharistic practices foster, rather than undermine, this sensibility today. At present, there appears to be an emphasis on Eucharist as consecrated elements we consume, identifying "Body of Christ" as an edible we ingest for a dose of grace. Such a posture impoverishes us.

Therefore, creative or otherwise, any approach we attempt in order to engage together in Eucharist in the face of the present health challenge should move toward the recovery of a more robust sense of the people as *corpus verum*, the "true" or "real body" of Christ, and the consecrated elements as *corpus mysticum*, "the mystical body." Over many centuries, these two notions became entirely reversed. In recent years, coupled with the rise of individualism and the predominance of consumerism, the reversal has predisposed us to focus on "receiving," rather than sharing and being Communion.

All of the above will prove critical to the rethinking of our Eucharistic practices that will be necessary when we cannot gather, or when the numbers in our gatherings must remain limited, and some members of the church feel the need to stay away.

From its earliest days, the church has grappled with how those isolated through sickness or persecution could still share in the sacrament. Answers emerging to this question placed a premium upon revealing and forming us as the Body of Christ, not simply providing people with the Body of Christ.

This proposal aims to ensure any Celebration of the Eucharist online is more than a “spectator sport,” but rather something in which the faithful can partake. Of equal importance, however, this approach allows for pastoral connection, something that may prove a welcome and profound experience in this time of pandemic. Many of those served by this liturgical option will be the most isolated and loneliest people in our congregations. All of us are likely to appreciate the sharing of Communion, in a way that is safe, as we are “one body for we all share in the one bread.” We are the Body of Christ together.

## Section 2

### Step 2 of Reopening our Churches

Section 2: In this section you will find the important changes, to Step 1 protocols, that come into effect with the implementation of Step 2 of Reopening our Churches. These changes do not negate the guidelines outlined for Step 1 except where specifically noted.

**Effective date:** The Sunday immediately following the province’s implementation of Step 2 of Reopening Ontario; a minimum of 21 days after the implementation of Step 1.

The guidelines laid out in Step 1 of Reopening our Churches remain in effect with the following change:

Church buildings will be open to in-person worship services and other activities. **The total number of people permitted to be present in the building at any one time will not exceed 15% of the building’s pre-pandemic capacity.** Face coverings/masks and 2m (6ft) of physical distance are required at all times. Please make ample use of hand sanitizer and/or handwashing before and after the gathering as well as during if there is accidental contact. Accidental contact includes touching an item previously touched by another person.

An attendance log book will be maintained with contact information for each attending person. Logbook sheets must be kept for 30 following the occasion of gathering.

Please note that yard sales, any similar event, and all non-essential activities remain prohibited.

It is highly recommended that online and outdoor options remain the primary mode of accomplishing church activities whenever possible.