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Monday, June 26, 2023.

## **RE: Updates concerning Archbishop's Vaccine Policy and COVID-19 Guidance**

Dear Friends in Christ:

I write to inform you of some important updates to the Diocesan response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please note that the changes below in no way imply the spread and risks of COVID-19 are no longer a reality. They simply respond to the circumstances as they are at this time. Changing conditions may once again necessitate adjusting or implementing policies and protocols in response.

### **Archbishop's VAX Policy**

The Diocese is lifting the COVID-19 vaccine mandate (2022-04), effective immediately. Those people and ministries specified in the Archbishop's vaccine policy are no longer required to provide proof of vaccination.

Individuals who are not licensed by the Archbishop as a result of previous non-compliance with the vaccine policy must notify her in writing that they wish to be licensed once again so a conversation can be held.

Those who were not permitted to function in congregational ministry in or through their parish because they were not vaccinated should make their desire known to their Incumbent if they wish to resume such ministry so a conversation can be held. Such individuals in congregations without an incumbent or interim incumbent should contact the Territorial Archdeacon.

Please note:

- We continue to strongly recommend for all persons vaccination against COVID-19, including continuing with all recommended booster shots. Vaccines have proven to be effective and safe, and the bivalent vaccine continues to be effective in regard to the ongoing mutations of the Omicron variant.
- Those who engage in ministry in other contexts are to comply with the protocols of the institutions in which they serve, regardless of the lifting of our own diocesan restrictions.
- The Archbishop is prepared to reinstate the requirements of our mandatory vaccination policy if conditions change, including any change in the recommendations of public health authorities.

### **Guidance and Recommendations**

The health and wellbeing of all people must always rank highly in our decision-making and practices. The COVID-19 pandemic persists throughout Ontario and within the Diocese. With this in mind, the following guidance and recommendations, consistent with public health advice, are offered, entrusting parish leaders to act according to the conditions of their context:

- Clergy, staff, and parishioners are urged to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms and to stay home if feeling unwell.
- Well-fitted medical masks or respirators are encouraged to be worn by people if they are at high risk for severe illness, recovering from COVID-19, are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, as well as those ministering with vulnerable and/or unvaccinated populations, and in crowded, enclosed and close-contact settings. Masking continues to be required in many long-term care and retirement homes.
- Individuals who desire to mask are encouraged to do so. A supply of masks should be readily available in each congregation.
- Enhanced mechanical ventilation should be facilitated wherever possible, with HVAC system fans running continuously during activities to increase air exchange. Opening windows and doors to the outside is a helpful practice, facilitating natural ventilation, particularly when there are no other ventilation options.
- Hand sanitizer stations should be placed throughout church buildings to assist with maintaining good hand hygiene.
- Presiders and Deacons must sanitize their hands before handling the communion elements. The lavabo ceremony and sanitizing one's hands are not substitutes for one another.
- Purificators should be changed regularly as the chalice is shared, if numbers warrant.

- Communion assistants must sanitize their hands before administering communion, and should consider being masked while distributing communion for their own protection and that of those they serve.
- Intinction of the bread into the chalice by communicants is not permitted. If communicants choose not to receive from the common cup, they have three options: i) cross their arms across their chest and let the chalice-bearer pass by; ii) touch the base of the chalice as it comes to them; or iii) leave the bread in their hand so the chalice-bearer can dip the bread in the chalice and place it on the communicant's tongue. The chalice-bearer should then re-sanitize their hands.
- All vessels and linens set out for the Liturgy must be thoroughly cleaned after use.
- Clergy and lay pastoral assistants who have symptoms of COVID-19 should refrain from providing in-person pastoral care to high-risk persons for a full 10 days after onset.
- In-person pastoral visits with those who are self-isolating, those who have COVID-19, or those residing in a facility where an outbreak has been declared are discouraged.
- Once again, all clergy, staff, and parishioners are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated to protect against COVID-19 and to stay current with any booster doses for which they are eligible. For more information related to COVID-19, please visit the links provided below and the website of your local health unit.
- Clergy are encouraged to notify and seek guidance from the Diocesan Archdeacon in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak related to a church service, ministry, or gathering.

There are a number of helpful links available to remain up-to-date on matters related to COVID-19. Here are three general sites that may be of immediate use to you:

Public Health Agency of Canada – COVID-19 Resource Page

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

Government of Ontario – COVID-19 Resource Page

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-coronavirus>

World Health Organization COVID-19 Page

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

The Diocese remains strongly committed to ensuring the health and safety of its members and guests to our worship spaces, other facilities and ministry sites, and to following the guidelines issued by public health authorities.

Thank you for your care and responsible action over the past few "COVID years."  
You demonstrated a true love of neighbour and did your part to help our  
communities respond well to the pandemic.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Koyle', with a small cross at the end.

The Ven. Dr. Jay Koyle,  
Diocesan Archdeacon and Executive Officer