



June 7, 2021

2 pages via e-mail plus one attachment

To all clergy and staff of the Archdiocese of Toronto,

I wish to provide an update on developments relating to places of worship as part of the Province of Ontario's reopening plan.

Last week, I had the opportunity, along with a number of local faith leaders, to meet with Premier Ford, Minister Elliott and Dr. Williams. The discussions were thoughtful and productive.

This afternoon, the provincial government announced revisions to the "Roadmap for Reopening" as they relate to places of worship. The updated measures will result in places of worship opening at 15% capacity in Step 1 and 25% capacity in Step 2. We are grateful to the government for these amendments.

Step 1 of the provincial reopening plan will begin on Friday, June 11 (Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus). I ask all parishes to open churches observing the new capacity restrictions at that time. A reminder of the following:

- For sacramental celebrations, churches are permitted 15 per cent capacity in Step 1. For funerals, please see the guidance noted on page two.
- Parishes should begin to celebrate public Masses as soon as they are certain they can implement our [WorshipSafe health and safety protocols](#). Holy Communion services should be discontinued once we move into Step 1.
- No meetings should take place in parish halls or other church spaces during Step 1. The only exception would be those deemed as essential services eg. Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous Meetings, food bank, etc.) These gatherings should be restricted to 10 people and ensure that all appropriate health and safety measures are in place (use of masks, hand sanitizer, physical distancing, etc.). Virtual meetings should replace in-person meetings wherever possible.
- As in the past, please ensure that all WorshipSafe guidelines are followed. The faithful should be reminded not to congregate in large numbers in or around the church before or after services. Particular attention should be directed to weddings, funerals and baptisms.
- Livestreaming of services should continue where this practice is underway and the dispensation from the Sunday Eucharist continues. The elderly, those with compromised immune systems or other health conditions should be encouraged to exercise extreme caution about any outings, including attendance at church.



- Parish offices should continue to operate at Phase 1 – Parish Offices Closed/Significant Operating Restrictions. Only essential staff in the office. Employees should work remotely wherever possible. Parish offices closed to the public - limited essential appointments only. Staff should take direction from the pastor regarding the local situation on the most prudent approach. In larger parishes, it may be possible to rotate staff if they cannot work remotely.
- Please continue to take great care in implementing robust health and safety measures in the rectory and office. In addition to keeping our parishioners safe, every measure should be taken to protect our clergy, essential staff and any volunteers who are required to assist at this time.
- Funerals - we anticipate the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) will follow similar protocols to when we were last at 15% capacity. At that time, they indicated that funeral home staff will not be permitted to assist inside a church if there are more than 50 people present. If attendance exceeds that number, funeral home staff have been directed by the BAO to place the casket at the church entrance and return to their vehicles. Upon completion of the service, church personnel/family are to return the casket to the hearse for delivery to the cemetery.

Parishes wishing to use funeral home services must limit capacity to 50 people or if they choose to have 15 per cent capacity, they need to make arrangements noted above. Based on today's announcement, we expect that the BAO will adjust their capacity restrictions accordingly – we will provide any updates as appropriate. Parishes should also dialogue with their local funeral home prior to making arrangements with families for additional clarity.

- Outdoor Liturgies - a provision has been made by the provincial government for outdoor religious services. While we recommend indoor liturgies wherever possible, the attachment does provide guidance for those parishes where outdoor liturgies may be a possibility.

Thank you for your continued co-operation as we make every effort to welcome the faithful in greater numbers once again.

Sincerely in Christ,

† Thomas Card. Collins

Thomas Cardinal Collins
Archbishop of Toronto