



Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

Dear Friends:

There have been so many good questions in the last several hours as we come to grips with the Ecclesiastical Province's suspension of public worship. All of us feel this action keenly, and none of us wants this new protocol to continue for any length of time. The more we can do in the short term, hopefully the sooner we can return to normal. The corporate worship of Almighty God is our calling and our joy. This is a poignant Lenten Season for all of us, to be sure.

Many clergy and parishes are already considering creative ways of sharing an online worship experience with their people. We are delighted and heartened by the initiative being demonstrated. Bishop Andrew Asbil will be [offering an online service of Morning Prayer](#) from St James Cathedral on Sunday, March 15 to which people can tune in.

If you too wish to offer a 'virtual' service, it is relatively easy to do so. Tips are provided [here](#). What we must insist on is that you keep the number of people gathered together to an absolute minimum – clergy and only a very few others: the camera operator, a reader or server if needed, a minimum number of musicians – with no congregation of any size. Practice good physical distancing in the church and keep those few people that you do have spread out in the space.

Apart from the purposes of live streaming, this is also the way that priests may consecrate the sacrament in order to provide home and hospital communions (in one kind), as needed.

Some parishes would like to open their space for a time to allow the faithful to enter and offer private devotions. That is permissible, but please allow a long enough window that you are not seen to be actively assembling a congregation. Please post signs that encourage physical distancing and keep your worship space scrupulously clean.

The key principle to follow is: NO CONGREGATION IS TO BE ASSEMBLED, OF ANY SIZE, AT ANY TIME.

Think “bare minimum” in all things. Although it is antithetical to what Church is all about, our goal at this time must be to gather as few people as possible.

Some of you have funerals and weddings already scheduled. Ideally, these would be postponed at this time, or kept as private events for family only. Please keep the congregation as small as possible. (The Ministry of Health maximum gathering number, currently at 250, may change at any time and must be strictly adhered to.) The celebration of the Eucharist at this time should be discouraged and if it does take place only in one kind as per our previous instructions. There is to be no reception at the church. Going forward all necessary funerals ought to be private until further notice, using these same guidelines.

Those of you with vital outreach ministries to vulnerable people have good questions too. These should be directed to Angie Hocking (hockinga@theredeemer.ca), who is our Diocesan point-person for all information concerning health issues for drop-in programs and front-line ministries to marginalized populations.

Lastly, if you are offering a livestream, video broadcast, podcast or other resource that can be shared, do let us know! We have set up a listing on our website for the whole Diocese to access.

We are so grateful for your understanding at this difficult time, and so proud of our Church for being faithful and bold in our call to discipleship under such challenging circumstances.

May God bless you all.

The College of Bishops of the Diocese of Toronto