The United Church of Canada
L'Eglise Unie du Canada

Regional Council 15
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Covid-19 Update November 10, 2021 (Nova Scotia)

Dear Regional Council 15 Members (Nova Scotia),

As follow up to the November 5, 2021 Covid-19 briefing, we have received the following information from Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health, regarding the increased case numbers in Nova Scotia:

At [the November 5, 20201) media briefing I informed Nova Scotians that the increased case numbers we are seeing are from several clusters of cases, primarily in Northern and Western Health Zones, related to several faith groups participating in a single multi-day event. This situation presents an opportunity to reinforce some key information on what is currently required in faith gatherings and events under the Public Health order and the COVID-19 Protocol for Proof of Full Vaccination for Events and Activities.

Proof of Vaccination

Proof of full vaccination is not required for a regular faith service, such as daily or weekly services. Services that are part of your faith's annual calendar (such as Christmas and Easter services in Christian faiths) are considered the same as regular daily/weekly services – no proof of full vaccination is required. If a Remembrance Day service is combined with a regular daily or weekly service, no proof of full vaccination is required. But if it's an additional special service, then proof is required.

Proof of full vaccination is required for participants (not officiants) at weddings, funerals and other ceremonies – even if they take place in a church or other faith facility. However, it is not required for indoor and outdoor funeral services with a maximum of 25 participants (not including officiants or funeral home staff). Proof of full vaccination is still required for visitation and receptions.

As an aside, please note that we are currently not granting any exception requests for people to enter Nova Scotia to attend a funeral. Anyone who is not fully vaccinated at least 14 days before arriving must self-isolate for at least 7 days and get 2 negative test results in Nova Scotia to stop isolating.

Proof of full vaccination is required any events and activities hosted by a faith organization, including social time after a service, bible study, youth group, retreats, community meals or fundraisers.

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It is also required when people rent/use the church's facilities (like a hall or other rooms) for events like a wedding reception or leisure activities/clubs like playing cards.

If a faith organization is offering space for mental health and addictions support groups or for programs and services for vulnerable populations, proof of full vaccination is not required. If faith organizations are offering food bank services, shelters or meal programs for vulnerable populations (including dine-in), proof of full vaccination is not required for people accessing those services or for employees providing them. It is required for volunteers providing them.

I encourage you to carefully review the protocol for further details. Please note that there are resources at the end that will help your organizations when you are hosting events and activities where proof of full vaccination is required.

Masking

The wearing of masks https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/masks/ in faith services and gatherings is required with the following exceptions:

- *is less than 2 years of age or age 2 to 4 years and their caregiver cannot persuade them to wear a mask;*
- *for whom the wearing of a mask is not possible because of the person's medical condition;*
- *is reasonably accommodated by not wearing a mask in accordance with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act;*
- *removes the mask momentarily for identification or ceremonial purposes (e.g. post wedding ceremony kiss)*
- *is an officiant (preaching) or performer (choir signing but not congregational singing) in the course of performing activities requiring vocalization such as talking or singing at the event or activity*

General information on other measures that you are encouraged to use and follow is at https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/avoiding-infection/

We understand everyone is eager for life to become more normal and we look forward to a time when we're able to lift restrictions further. For now, as we continue to navigate the fourth wave of the pandemic, I thank you for your continued efforts to keep your congregations safe from COVID-19.

Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health

Once again, Dr. Strang offers his thanks for your ongoing support to the province's response to the COVID 19 pandemic. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to be in contact at fmaccuish@united-church.ca or at 1-800-268-3781 ext. 6156.

Sincerely,

Faith

Faith March-MacCuish
Executive Minister