

Subject: COVID Communiqué for May 25
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From: Bishop of Ottawa
To: Bishop's Office
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Hello and welcome to COVID Communiqué 103.

It was a difficult weekend for our diocese's people and property—we hope you, your families, congregations, and communities are all well and your churches came through relatively unscathed. If you do have any property damage, Sanjay Grover, our Director of Financial Ministry, is available to help. You can email him [here](#) for information or advice. As well, you can find details regarding our self-insurance policy [here](#).

Another change is coming, which we hope is more welcome than last weekend's extreme weather. On June 1, parishes in the Diocese of Ottawa may move to the Green stage rules of our pandemic plan. You can review newly updated Green protocols [here](#).

There are several important points to mention about this move. First of all, it's clear from what we hear on the help line that parishes are not all on the same page about this—some think it's overdue, others feel it's too soon. Therefore, each parish is encouraged to move into Green stage at a pace that is right for them. Take some time to assess the readiness of your congregation for this move, as well as the situation in your community, before you decide how to proceed. That said, please note that we're following Ottawa Public Health's position on continued masking: **“Residents are highly recommended to continue wearing a mask indoors especially when physical distancing may not be possible or proves to be challenging in crowded areas.”**

Thus, while under Green rules no one is obliged to wear a mask, it continues to be the safe thing to do, especially for and on behalf of our vulnerable members. We encourage clergy and other parish leaders to continue to wear masks during services except while performing their leadership roles.

Ask people, since masking is a personal decision now, not to comment on what others choose to do. However, do encourage people to get all the shots they're eligible for and keep promoting social distancing. Also, now the warmer weather is (mostly) here, open the windows and the doors. A well-ventilated space is a safer space.

It's increasingly clear the pandemic is not going away any time soon and entering the Green stage, rather than just saying “we're back to normal”, is an important symbol that we are still operating under the pandemic plan—and an acknowledgment that restrictions could increase again if the virus resurges (as it has the two previous falls, after more open summers). If you have questions about moving to the Green stage of our plan, please send them to us at:

C19helpdesk@ottawa.anglican.ca.

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