

**Video Address to Congregation
January 11, 2022
COVID-19 Update**

Happy New Year, everyone. I hope that all of you, despite the limitations on our movements and activities, were able to enjoy a peaceful and joy filled time over Christmas with family and friends in one way or another. With 2021 now behind us, let's be optimistic that 2022 portends better times ahead.

My purpose in speaking with you today is to provide an update on Church Council's planning and ongoing discussions for a return to in-person worship at Trinity Anglican.

Before I do that, however, I would like to share my heartfelt appreciation for the wonderful online services broadcast from Rev. Lorraine and Rev. Andy's living room. These have kept us together through words and music over these last many months. The online component may also continue to be a key part of our worship services, even after this pandemic is over.

That being said, please know that your Council is very mindful during our discussions of the weariness, frustration and sense of separation you all have been feeling as the pandemic drags on. Like everyone else, we yearn for the time when we can be back together again in worship and in our groups enjoying each other's fellowship and renewing friendships. You can be assured that Council's continuing priority is to

achieve that as soon as we possibly can, recognizing that we must comply with the restrictions prescribed by Trinity Anglican and that the health and safety of our congregation, ministers and staff remain paramount.

So where do matters stand now with Trinity Anglican? With the lightning spread of the omicron variant, Trinity Anglican has suspended in-person worship services and closed the church building to public access until the end of January. Only clergy and those supporting worship may access the church for the restricted purposes of live streaming or recording worship services. Small groups of singers or musicians not exceeding five in number may enter the building for the purposes of rehearsing or recording performances. In all cases, according to the rules established by the Anglican Diocese, all those entering the church for these purposes must be fully vaccinated (meaning two doses of COVID vaccine) or in possession of a valid medical/human rights exemption supported by a recent negative COVID rapid test and remain masked and physically separated at all times. The current closure of Trinity Anglican will be reviewed at the end of January in light of the prevailing conditions and new directives from the Anglican Diocese.

The unpredictability of the virus and the changing nature of the pandemic restrictions have required Council to take a very flexible and incremental approach to planning for a return to in-person worship. The insidious nature of omicron and the challenges of upping

vaccination levels, now encompassing a third dose, have made it extremely difficult to plan ahead and to pinpoint dates with any certainty. Some of the directional decisions which Council made at its December 13 meeting have already been overtaken by intervening events.

When Council resumed its discussion of a return to in-person worship at its January 10 meeting, it started with the recognition that the target date of the end of January was no longer realistic. Given that Trinity Anglican is closed to the public until January 31 when the Diocese will issue new directives for February, Council renewed its decision to continue worshipping online for the foreseeable future, a phrase you have heard all too often by now. Council will reassess this decision at its February 14 meeting in light of prevailing pandemic conditions and the Diocese's directions to Trinity Anglican.

Margaret Heney and Lisa Kyriakides were recalled to duty as planned on January 2. We are so pleased, and relieved, to have them back on strength and commend them for their perseverance and continued commitment during their period of layoff. Although they will not be able to resume their full duties due to the church closure and associated restrictions on group sizes, they nevertheless will be looking at ways of making contributions of music to our online services. We are looking forward to listening to new performances by our Chancel Choir and Handbell Ensembles as part of worship.

Council also revisited the matter of mandatory vaccinations to participate in AUC events. At an earlier meeting, Council endorsed the Anglican Diocese's mandatory vaccination policy for application to AUC clergy, staff and volunteers and also extended the policy to attendees at in-person worship services. Adoption of the policy meant that AUC clergy, staff and volunteers, as well as those attending AUC worship services, must show proof of two doses of vaccine or in the alternative, provide a valid medical/human rights exemption supported by a recent negative COVID test in order to be admitted to the church building. Since the adoption of that motion back in November, third doses of vaccine have become available to bolster our defenses against the virus. With the availability of booster doses ramping up and to ensure the safety of all, Council updated the vaccination policy by approving a motion that AUC clergy, staff and volunteers must now have three doses of COVID vaccine or a valid exemption and negative test in order to enter the building.

Council expressed its support for making third doses mandatory for attendees at AUC in-person worship and activities as the right and responsible action to take for the safety of the congregation. While giving approval-in-principle to mandatory third doses, Council decided to defer consideration of a motion formally adopting the requirement to its February meeting since the church is closed in any event. In the time between now and then, many more people will hopefully receive booster doses and who is to know, we may be into fourth doses by that

point. More will be said on this important policy matter following the February meeting.

So, to reiterate: First of all, we will worship online until further notice. We can be encouraged, though, that our online services will be further enriched by new musical pieces by members of the Chancel Choir and Handbell Ensembles. Secondly, Council will be discussing the return to in-person worship once again on February 14. Let's pray that conditions will be on the way to significant improvement by then. Finally, Council will be giving further consideration to what will constitute "fully vaccinated" for the purposes of participating in AUC in-person worship and activities.

You can expect to hear further from us following Council's meeting on February 14 or sooner if significant developments arise in the meantime. Feel free to contact me at any time should you have any questions or comments. Your feedback is always welcome.

Until the next time, stay safe, stay healthy and keep looking ahead with hope and optimism. Thank you for taking the time to listen.