

# **Guidelines following Department of Health Recommendations of October 4, 2021**

**Phase 5 of Nova Scotia's reopening plan is starting October 4 with a cautious approach.**<sup>1</sup>

While most restrictions will be lifted, some will be maintained, and border restrictions will be added for people coming from Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some notable aspects of Phase 5 include:

- masks will continue to be mandatory in indoor public places
- physical distancing and gathering limits for events hosted by a recognized business or organization will be lifted
- the informal gathering limits of 25 people indoors and 50 outdoors will remain in place
- proof of full vaccination will be required for non-essential events and activities

## **Protect yourself and others from COVID-19**

There will continue to be cases of COVID-19 in Nova Scotia. You should continue to take steps to help protect yourself and your community. These steps also help protect you and others from other respiratory illnesses like the flu and colds.

## **Maintain everyday healthy habits**

### **Cleaning**

Regular cleaning is recommended.

### **Cover coughs and sneezes**

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Or use the inside of your elbow. Make sure you follow [cough and sneeze guidelines](#).

### **Wash your hands**

Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after being in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. Use hand sanitizer when you can't use soap and water and follow [hand washing guidelines](#).

### **Wear a mask**

[Wearing a non-medical mask](#) can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses. A mask helps stop droplets spreading when someone speaks, laughs, coughs or sneezes (including someone who has COVID-19 but has no obvious symptoms).

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20210929005>

## **Gather safely**

You don't need to maintain social distancing from others, but it's still worthwhile keeping a safe distance from people you don't know while out and about. This helps reduce the spread of COVID-19 within the community.

## **Keep your workplace safe**

Employers and employees need to work together to maintain a healthy workplace. Occupational health and safety (OHS) practices (like plexiglass dividers and increased cleaning) help prevent COVID-19 and lessen the risk of many respiratory and other illnesses. And remember to stay home if you feel sick and watch for [COVID-19 symptoms](#).

## **Vaccination, testing and self-isolation**

### **Get vaccinated**

Vaccines reduce the likelihood of severe illness. When you get vaccinated, you also reduce the risk of passing on COVID-19 to your community. You can [book your vaccination appointment](#) if you're 12 and older.

### **Stay home if you feel sick**

If you feel sick, stay home and watch for [COVID-19 symptoms](#). If you have symptoms, you need to self-isolate and [book a COVID-19 test](#). By getting a test, you help keep your community safe.

### **Self-isolate when required**

If you need to self-isolate, it's because there's a risk of spreading COVID-19 to others (even if you don't have symptoms). Check the [self-isolation requirements](#) and how to self-isolate.

## **What does it mean for parishes?**

Beginning the weekend of October 9-10, parishes can remove all directional markers and seating restrictions in the church.

Hand sanitizers are to be maintained and their use encouraged; in the church, hall and meeting rooms.

Registering for mass and asking the "Covid questions" is no longer required. However, for the next few months, we advise that the questionnaire signage be maintained, as a reminder to parishes of their responsibility during this time of transition. "People who are not fully vaccinated need to be able to access essential services."<sup>2</sup>

Capacity limits are to be in accordance with the Fire Marshall directive for each church and hall.

Holy Water fonts are to remain empty for the present time.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20210929005>

Hymnals, prayer books, envelopes can now be used. Bulletins/ parish newsletters can be distributed.

Meeting rooms can now be used. Masks are to be worn when not seated.

Money counters should continue wearing disposable gloves or have access to hand sanitizer and be encouraged to wash their hands regularly.

Seating in the sanctuary can be extended to allow for altar servers. The credence table can be re-positioned as it was before Covid restrictions were established.

Church washrooms can open; however, we suggest minimum use be encouraged. Hand washing signs are to be placed in the washroom. A sanitizing dispenser should be placed outside each washroom, wherever possible.

Water fountains or coolers should be turned off for the present time. They should be clearly marked as being “out of service”.

Sanitizing the church is no longer required.

### **Celebration of the Eucharist**

All in the assembly (with the exception of the presider) are to wear a mask throughout the liturgy. Ministers can remove their masks to proclaim the Word.

Ministers of hospitality are to be present before Mass at the entrance(s) to the church to encourage the use of hand sanitizers. Entrances/exits can return to in/out access.

Where it is the custom for the people to pray the Rosary or other devotional prayers before Mass, this practice may continue.

The priest celebrating Mass is encouraged to wear a mask during the procession and distribution of communion, However, he must wash/sanitize his hands before and after Mass.

Choirs can now lead music during the liturgy. Choirs are to be positioned away from the congregation as before, however choir members need not be social distanced from each other. Masks are to be worn at all times. The assembly can also sing.

The entrance procession can begin at the entrance of the church. The Book of the Gospel can be carried in by the Deacon. If there is no Deacon the book is placed on the altar before mass begins.

A server can now hold the book for the presider for the introductory rites.

The “Liturgy of the Word” can now include two lectors, one for each reading. The lector may be seated in the assembly and should be close to the ambo. The Psalm is sung by the cantor at the ambo. Following the second reading, the lector removes the Lectionary so that the deacon

(or priest) can proclaim the Gospel. Candles can be used for the Gospel. The Creed is professed and the Prayers of the Faithful are offered as usual.

The celebration of the Children's Liturgy of the Word can begin. Masks are to be worn at all times by both the children and the presider.

The monetary collection can be received by the ushers during the preparation of the altar.

Kneeling during the Eucharistic prayer beginning with the epiclesis is to be restored. If the church does not have kneelers, then standing is the preferred position. If they are standing for the words of institution the congregation is to bow when the priest genuflects.

Where possible, the ciboria containing hosts for the assembly is to be placed at some distance from the priest's chalice and paten. If the ciboria have covers, these may remain in place during the Eucharistic Prayer.

Holy Communion is distributed by the priest, deacon and extraordinary ministers of Communion (only if necessary). Communion from the cup is reserved for the presider and concelebrants only. All ministers of Holy Communion are to sanitize their hands before distributing the Eucharist. The assembly is to come to the front of the sanctuary to receive communion. It is desirable that the priest remind the people that they are to place one open hand upon the other to reverently receive the Sacred Host. Holy Communion shall be received only in the hand at this time. Communion on the tongue will not be permitted at this time. Masks are to be worn by the Communion Minister and those receiving communion.

Concelebrants are to receive Holy Communion by intinction. The Deacon does not receive from the chalice.

Following the distribution of Holy Communion, the remaining Eucharist is placed in the tabernacle in the usual manner. All vessels are placed on the credence table, to be taken by a server or sacristan to the sacristy following Mass. Purifying the vessels will be done after mass.

Communion to the Sick and Homebound can begin. We suggest hand sanitizing, wearing masks, except for prayer be maintained.

### **Other Rites Celebrated in the Church**

**The baptism of infants and young children** are celebrated in the usual manner. Baptisms can be held during the Sunday liturgy. The priest or deacon sanitizing his hands before and after the pouring of water and anointing, the Sacrament of Baptism is celebrated in the usual manner according to the Rite of Baptism. The water in the font is to be replaced after each baptism.

**The Christian Initiation of Adults** (including children of catechetical age) is celebrated during Mass, since the rite includes the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. The Reception into Full Communion is also to be celebrated during Mass.

**Marriages and Funerals** may be celebrated following the directives above. Provincial regulations mandate proof of vaccination is required for all attendees. *(A request has been sent*

*to Dr. Strang to lift the proof of vaccination requirement. Until we receive a reply, please abide with this directive)* Receptions will require proof of vaccination. Capacity for receptions will follow the directive for hall use. (See below)

**First Communion and Confirmation** may be celebrated following the directives above.

**Daily Mass** may be celebrated following the directives above.

**Pastoral home visits** can take place; however, we suggest contact be made with the individual to ensure that they are comfortable to receive a visit. Wearing a mask is required, as well as, sanitizing your hands before entering the home. Masks can be removed for prayer and conversation, if the individual agrees.

**Formation classes for children** (especially under 12 years of age). We recommend the practice outlined by the Department of Health for the school setting be followed. Refer to <https://backtoschool.ednet.ns.ca/public-health-guidance> located on the Department of Health website.

**Vaccination** – The Province is working on a vaccination policy. The Department of Health has now deemed places of worship as “essential service” (Covid 19 updated, dated September 8, 2021). “People who are not fully vaccinated need to be able to access essential services.”<sup>3</sup> Proof of vaccination is not required for “faith services”.<sup>4</sup>

### **Other use of Church Facilities**

**Halls** – Capacity for parish events is subject to the fire marshal requirements. Wearing masks is mandatory. Non parish events are limited to 25 people indoors. Proof of vaccination will be required for parish and non-parish events and activities.

**Meeting Rooms** can be used for parish events without the use of masks for staff meetings. Masks are to be worn by all others, except when seated. Proof of vaccination is required for all volunteers but not for staff.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20210929005>

<sup>4</sup> <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/proof-of-full-vaccination-policy/>