



The Diocese of Huron **Pastoral Care Guidelines**

The provision of pastoral care is an important part of the ministry of the Church, especially so in times of crisis and illness. Social distancing measures enacted to limit the spread of COVID-19 require new and adaptive practices to be deployed, however, pastoral care must continue to be a priority of all clergy and lay pastoral assistants in the diocese.

Guiding Principles:

1. Strictly adhere to all federal, provincial, municipal and diocesan directives and recommendations with regards to physical distancing measures, self-isolation procedures, and/or health hygiene.
2. Stay at home unless it is absolutely necessary to leave your home.
3. Vulnerable people for whom there is a risk of more severe outcomes should refrain from engaging in ministry beyond their home and delegate responsibilities to others as necessary. This includes those who are: aged 70 and over; those who have a compromised immune system and those with underlying medical conditions.

The following guidelines have been established to in order to ensure the care of those we serve as well those offering care.

1) Limit Pastoral Visiting

- Pastoral care should be carried out by phone calls or video conferencing wherever possible
- Keep in-person visits to parishioners and others in need to those most in need of care and compassion, where the presence of a minister is essential, for instance to support a highly vulnerable and isolated older adult, anointing a gravely ill person and/or to comfort the dying.
- In-person pastoral visits should not be undertaken to people who are self-isolating or to those who have been infected by COVID-19.
- If permitted to visit, follow all institutional guidelines when making visits made to long-term care homes and/or hospitals. Visit only one person at any time, even if that means separated visits to the home or hospital. If you are unsure of the protocols, call ahead and speak with the nursing station.
- Following a visit to an institution where COVID-19 may be present, wash your hands thoroughly, go directly home, change clothes, and wash the clothes you have worn in hot water.

2) **Enhance Communication**

- Clergy should implement a parish plan for regular communication with parishioners, by phone, email, social media and/or other remote means.
- Pastoral visiting teams should now make their visits by phone, prioritizing those who may not have family or friends to check in on them.
- Clergy and lay leaders should send regular emails to parish email lists which include prayer resources and spiritual encouragement.
- Share pastoral care contact information widely so that those in need of care know how to connect with clergy or lay pastoral staff without visiting the church.
- Ensure that the church answering machine message contains the contact information for the incumbent in case of a pastoral emergency.

3) **Postpone Pastoral offices**

- Weddings and indoor funerals should be postponed until further notice.
- Graveside funerals or interments with no more than 10 people (including the officiant) maybe be conducted with the prior approval of your territorial archdeacon.
- In extraordinary circumstances, permission may be sought from the bishop in order to conduct a wedding service in a case where extraordinary pastoral circumstances are such that postponing the service is not possible. If such permission is granted, only the officiant, the parties to the marriage and two witnesses may be present.

