



Diocese of Corner Brook and Labrador

October 19th, 2021

Re: The Use of Vaccine Passports at Faith-based Gatherings Hosted in our Parishes.

Dear People of God:

On October 22nd, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is instituting a vaccine passport system for those who want to attend a large variety of indoor events and services. Faith-based gatherings are also included on this list, but can be exempted if they follow the following protocols:

- Capacity is limited to 50%;
- *Everyone must wear a non-medical mask at all times (including officiant and musicians);
- Congregational singing is not permitted;
- The names and contact information of all attendees must be recorded and retained for 14 days for contact tracing, and must be shared with public health officials if requested;
- Physical distancing must be maintained between individuals from different family groups;
- Entry must be restricted to only those who do not have COVID-19 symptoms and who are not required to self-isolate for any reason.

*Further clarification sought from Public Health: Masks can be removed by the person speaking/singing when: 1) they are more than 6ft/2M from other people, 2) They're the sole users of a given microphone.

After some study and consultation, and considering the nature of our worship services, I ask that we continue to "move forward together" in following these trustworthy rules. At a point in time when fully vaccinated people can still spread the virus, children under the age of 12 cannot be vaccinated and vaccination passports are granted to people with medical exemptions, the adoption of the vaccination passport system may lead to a false sense of safety and weaken the observation of the existing protocols. By keeping to the aforementioned protocols – until such time as Public Health should lift them, we focus on what unites us and not on what divides us. On a same note, I call on those who are not vaccinated to receive the vaccine as soon as possible.

In saying all this, I would like to offer a special thanks to those who have been charged with the implementation of all these measures. Your pleasant manner and attention to the well-being of our parishioners are greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Fraternally in Christ,

Bishop Bart van Rooijen

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