



The United Church of Canada

Living Skies Regional Council

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Dear Members of Living Skies Regional Council,

Autumn greetings to you. It's hard to remember that summer was just a few short weeks ago as the weather begins to cool and the leaves begin to make their annual colourful change. Many of us are moving back into our fall routines at church, at home, at work and at school. We are doing our best to settle into these fairly normal things in the midst of this on going COVID-19 pandemic. A pandemic that keeps changing and offering us challenges to consider. The Delta Variant of the virus is highly transmissible, and as we are seeing, is negatively impacting our health care system in the province. Those in our communities who are unvaccinated and unable to be vaccinated are carrying the bulk of the infections. It's an anxious time for many of us, especially as we consider what the fall will look like for our communities of faith, in particular for those considering or offering in-person worship.

Today, **September 16**, the Saskatchewan Government and the Saskatchewan Health Authority announced new health mandates that will be going into effect on **Friday, September 17**. The restriction that most directly affects churches is the return to indoor mandatory masking. All people coming into our churches for worship, for activities, for rentals, must wear a mask. This mandate is going to be in place until at least the end of October.

If you have been following the news reports or checking out the SHA website, you will notice that there will also be a Proof of Vaccination policy taking effect October 1. This proof of vaccination or proof of a negative COVID-19 test **DOES NOT** apply to churches and places of worship at this time. To read the full public health order, [check this link](#).

As we continue to do our very best to keep our communities safe and healthy, I remind you to meet or exceed the guidelines and restrictions put in place by the Government and Health Authority. Consider physical distancing along with the mandatory masking. Increase the frequency of wiping down high touch areas. Consider cutting down on the amount you sing (if you are singing) during worship. Evaluate the way you do Communion, pass the offering plate, or share the peace. Maybe put the potluck or fall supper on hold for now or arrange for curbside pick up instead.

I know we were really hoping to be past all or most of this by now. The reality is that COVID-19 will likely be part of our every day living for a while, and we need to do our best to mitigate the spread in our churches. This is an act of love of neighbour, that sacred vocation of not only caring for the neighbour we know, but also the ones we don't.

We might not all be in the same boat, we are definitely in the same storm. We can help each other navigate this time with patience, compassion and love. Be kind, be safe, be love.

Blessings,

Rev. Tricia Gerhard

Chair, Living Skies Regional Council Executive