



**SYNOD OF  
ALBERTA  
AND THE  
TERRITORIES**

Incorporated as Alberta Synod

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***Spirit -Led  
Leadership***

***Hope-Filled  
Discipleship***

***Innovative  
Tradition***

***Collaborative  
Partnerships***

August 24, 2021

Dear Beloved of God –

***The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.***

In these final days of August, I am deeply aware of the approach of fall and the fact that some congregations in our Synod have already moved to in-person worship while many others are planning to begin in person some time in September. Each decision has been made with careful conversation between council and pastoral leadership, and many continue to follow the “June 2021 Stage 1: Guidance for Places of Worship” distributed by our provincial government. This Guidance is available on the Synod website: [albertasynod.ca](http://albertasynod.ca) – Our Resources/COVID 19/In-Person Worship.

At this time, with respect to any in-person gatherings, for meetings and worship, I strongly encourage being vaccinated and continued use of masks, physical distancing, and careful sanitization.

In all situations, err on the side of love for your neighbour.

As you lean into the future, consider some important questions:

- Once back in the building, should online worship continue? If not, who will be excluded? If so, what should it look like?
- Online financial stewardship—how can it be encouraged and supported?
- How do we assess how life has changed for our neighbours and community? How do we care for our community and congregation?
- How can online access be used to expand small groups?
- How can we collaborate and work in partnership for online worship? for study? for service? for ministry?
- What does online access to resources and activities allow us to dream of doing—beyond what we were capable of before this reality?

Your conversation should include every aspect of congregational life. Being a congregation in this time means rethinking every aspect of life and ministry; it means moving forward to a new place where we very intentionally ask what we can do to make post-pandemic church life fresh and effective . . . a new creation.

**Whatever your congregation determines regarding in-person gatherings, be assured that as your Bishop, I will support your decision, and that together as synod staff, we will seek to assist you as we journey forward.**

A helpful resource as in-person worship begins, or continues, in your context, is the ELCA's "Re-Gathering Rite" which can be used or adapted for congregational usage. It is available on the Synod website: [albertasynod.ca](http://albertasynod.ca) – Our Resources/COVID 19/Worship Resources.

Thank you for your resiliency, your faithfulness, and the deep care you have shown. This is what it means to equip, empower, and engage God's people to love and serve. You have all been witnesses to what we can do when we are church together and church for the sake of the world.

I recognize the weariness I see on many of your faces. But know that even in our weariness, the Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.

Continue to be humble and gentle with one another. Honour each other. Welcome moments of joy; make space for lament. Help each other live into hope. Learn from this journey in the wilderness and let the learning lead us forward. Trust that God is at work in this time and look for the new things God is doing even now.

Continue in prayer: for those who are isolated or lonely, for our congregations, rostered leaders, lay leaders, for our specialized ministries, for the vulnerable in our midst, for those suffering from COVID-19, for all grieving losses of any kind, for those who are burdened with additional work and those who are unemployed or underemployed, for provincial leaders, for emergency workers, doctors, nurses, and essential workers who are bearing the burden of this pandemic, and for students and teachers.

My support, prayers, and thanks accompany you. May God bless us and strengthen us to be the church we are called to be.

***The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13***

In Christ Jesus—  
Shalom,



The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, Bishop  
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