



TWO RIVERS PASTORAL CHARGE
THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
Bayswater-Summerville, Long Reach, Westfield United Churches
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May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be always with you!

Since the Covid-19 pandemic reached New Brunswick in March 2020, the guiding principle for the leadership of Two Rivers Pastoral Charge has been Jesus's double-love commandment – that the most important commandments are to love God with our whole selves, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. We have faced many challenges in the past year and a half, especially since so many of the things that we do as the church are the same things that tend to spread Covid-19 – gathering in larger or smaller groups, singing together, sharing meals, hugs.

In Luke's gospel, when Jesus taught about loving God and loving our neighbours, someone asked him, "but who is my neighbour?" Jesus responded with the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Our neighbour is anyone who is vulnerable or anyone who is in need.

Yesterday, the government of New Brunswick announced that proof of vaccination would be required in a number of situations as of Wednesday September 22, including at "indoor organized gatherings." Last night, the Official Board of Two Rivers Pastoral Charge met and discussed the implications for our community of faith. Even though faith gatherings aren't explicitly named in the list that followed (though weddings and funerals are), our understanding is that when we gather together in our buildings, we are gathering at an "indoor organized gathering."

And so last night, the Official Board decided that beginning September 22, we will be asking for proof of vaccination from everyone age 12 and older attending indoor gatherings at the church – this will include worship as well as gatherings of committees and groups. If you have a medical exemption certificate, we ask you to remain masked at all times at the gathering for your own protection as well as for the protection of our more vulnerable members.

The Official Board feels that this is in keeping with our understanding of loving our neighbours, especially the more vulnerable people among us. Children under the age of 12 haven't yet had the opportunity to be vaccinated and continue to be vulnerable. Some people have medical conditions that don't allow them to be vaccinated and continue to be vulnerable. Other people have medical conditions that mean that their bodies aren't able to produce a good immune response even when they have been vaccinated, and they also continue to be vulnerable. If we truly love our neighbours, we will want to keep these more vulnerable people safe.

We do understand that while there seems to have been a very high vaccination rate within our Pastoral Charge, there may be some of you who have chosen not to be vaccinated for reasons other than a medical exemption. Please know that we still love you, and you are still very welcome to participate in the life of the church; though we ask you to participate virtually, worshipping with us on Facebook live, and electronic participation in group and committee work.

The government announced that there are a number of ways that proof of vaccination can be shown, including:

- showing the immunization record that you received from the place you were vaccinated
- showing a picture or a photocopy of this immunization record
- showing your electronic immunization record (MyHealthNB)

Within a month, the government plans to develop a cell phone app that you can use as well.

I suspect that it is going to become routine for all of us to carry proof of vaccination in one form or another when we go out. Personally, I plan to take a picture of my paper immunization record with my cell phone so that I can pull out my cell phone and easily show it when it is asked for. If you would like a photocopy of your vaccination record to protect your original (or a shrunken copy that is easier to carry in your wallet), you are welcome to bring it into the church office and Elaine or I can help you out with that.

I do thank you for your ongoing commitment to being the church – for answering the call to love God and to love all of our neighbours. If you have any questions about this policy, please feel free to reach out to me, or to Ross Sherwood, the chair of the Official Board.

Blessings to you and yours, today and always!

Rev. Kate Jones
Minister – Two Rivers Pastoral Charge