

THE BISHOP OF THE BAHAMAS AND THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

The Rt. Rev'd. Laish Zane Boyd, Sr.

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MEMORANDUM

Date: 28th December, 2021
To: The Clergy and Parish Administrators
From: Bishop Laish Boyd
Re: **Omicron Variant of COVID-19**

Dear Friends and Christ,

We cannot deny that the Omicron variant of COVID-19 has put us in a new place. The virus is more virulent and many times more contagious than the Delta or other variants. The numbers are increasing rapidly and expected to explode even more. This is extremely dangerous and very alarming.

While Omicron appears not to make a person as ill as other variants, an infection is still an infection, and increased infection leads to increased numbers of persons being ill. Person being ill to any extent leads to a greater call on our healthcare facilities –which puts a strain on personnel and facilities that they DO NOT need, since they are already oversubscribed. We could face a collapse of our health-care system.

In light of this, in keeping with the concerns of the public health and medical experts, and in support of the concern on part of the government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, I ask that we effect the following plan of action immediately, as a short-term resource and until further notice.

1. We move the maximum allowance of bodies in worship spaces FROM 33% of capacity TO 25% of capacity. Thankfully this does not affect actual capacity very much.
2. All other protocols to be strictly – I mean STRICTLY – enforced.
3. Sanitize hands and frequently–touched surfaces regularly.
4. In particular, limit congregational movement within the liturgy.
5. Limit any form of gathering in small groups before and after the service. Enter, worship and leave!
6. The sung mass allowance I gave for the high holy days is rescinded immediately. Please revert to said mass with reduced hymns, i.e, 3-4 hymns per service

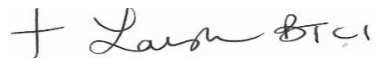
7. Services should be no longer than 85 minutes maximum.
8. Open all doors and windows, even if you are running air-conditioning with ultraviolet filters installed. As it now cooler air-conditioning can remain off but fans should be on, at least at a low setting. This maximizes air flow. Virus particles hang in the air for hours, so moving air is a life-saver.
9. During worship masks must be worn continually by everyone: the congregation, the choir, soloists and the praise team. If the congregation can sing hymns in a mask so can every other singer.
**Readers should not remove their masks to read the lesson/intercessions.
**Preachers should not remove their masks to preach
10. In keeping with the new gathering restrictions, no face-to-face church meeting indoors should exceed 20 persons and no outdoor meeting should exceed 30 persons.
11. Any food event should be grab and go only.
12. Aggressively encourage vaccination and booster shots. Encourage the unvaccinated to consider seriously getting vaccinated. Even on this omicron landscape, the vaccinated are less likely to get ill and, should they become infected, they are more likely to be spared serious illness and death.
13. In your personal life eliminate gatherings of people from different household.
14. As you move around the community, keep the protocols and encourage others to do so. Remember that our behaviour is instructive and our example is powerful.
15. Holy communion remains in one kind for the congregation with only the celebrant partaking of the cup.

Conclusion

This is a serious time with exponentially dangerous ramifications. This time calls for a rapid and decisive response. As a Church, let us join together in practicing and modelling good Christian stewardship. Let us continue to take the lead in modelling responsible behaviour in the face of the pandemic.

Once again a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and your families.

Yours in Christ,



The Rt. Rev'd. Laish Boyd
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF THE BAHAMAS
AND THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

+LZB/lf