



Dear Colleagues,

The COVID-19 situation across our Synod continues to evolve on a near daily basis. Over the Christmas holidays we have seen the tightening of restrictions in all four of our provincial jurisdictions. Since the beginning of this pandemic, I have urged you to do whatever is necessary to protect one another and safeguard the health and safety of our communities. We have done this as an act of love for, and a gift of service to, our neighbours. Twenty-one months later, this priority still stands.

To that end, and with the information we have today, **I feel that it is both prudent and responsible for Eastern Synod congregations to suspend all in-person worship services and other gatherings effective immediately and for a period of at least four weeks.** I commit to reviewing this advice and communicating an updated recommendation to you by the end of January 2022. Likewise, a decision regarding the Spiritual Retreats scheduled for the month of February will be made and communicated to you as soon as possible.

I remain encouraged by the resiliency and faithfulness with which our leaders and faith communities continue to engage these challenges. Your actions are a clear proclamation of the gospel that extend far beyond the brick and mortar limits of our physical buildings. I am deeply grateful and inspired by each of you.

I am praying for you, dear partners in ministry. May God bless and keep you.

Bishop Michael