**Pembina Parish and the New Public Health Orders**

Even if your health has not been compromised by Covid 19, your life has been altered, whether as a student, in the workforce, or retired. After a year and a half, we are now in the ‘fourth wave,’ with a ‘wave’ being defined as a surge in Covid cases admitted to our hospitals.

During the first three waves Health Orders have limited capacity or mandated the closure of churches. The Pembina Parish Covid Response group has viewed 30% capacity as the threshold for the decision to suspend in-person services. The current Orders limit in-person service numbers to 33% of capacity with the noted exception of churches limiting their attendance to those fully immunised and children who are not yet eligible for vaccinations.

Our Covid Response Group has maintained that we want our church services to be welcoming for all and have encouraged diligence to our Covid safety protocols. After the new Health Orders were announced last Friday, our Group met to discuss the way forward. Given that most of the Covid hospital admissions are unvaccinated and all the transfers to ICU beds are unvaccinated we decided it is time to ask the question ‘Have you been vaccinated?’. We only came to this difficult decision after much discussion and the vote was unanimous. We feel that every effort needs to be taken now to protect the health of our community. The Southern Health district has the lowest vaccine protection and will experience the most harm from this current wave of the Covid virus.

Commencing on October 10th attendance at Pembina Parish services (St. Paul’s and Zion-Calvin) will require you to show proof of vaccination for all eligible for vaccines (children should be accompanied by a vaccinated adult). This is a temporary measure and will be reviewed by the Covid Group and Leadership team at the end of October. We will communicate any changes through News and Notes. Masking, distancing, and sanitizing will continue as per usual.

We understand that not all will agree with this decision. We also know that not taking this step would put everyone attending worship at greater risk, including those who cannot, or have chosen not to be vaccinated There was no easy answer. This disease divides us and so we encourage everyone to be vaccinated in order to bring an end to this pandemic.

We remain committed to being a caring community, so please join us for worship in-person (if vaccinated) or online as we seek to be shaped in the way of Christ. And please note the vaccination requirement does not apply to dropping by the church or receiving care from the minister. All are welcome. We will get through this.

Brian Saunderson

Chair of Leadership Team