**Directives for the Re-opening of Churches**

**Increase in Attendance by the Faithful**

June 9, 2020

Слава Ісусу Христу!

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Dear Reverend Pastors and Faithful,

 The Province of Alberta has now moved to Stage Two of its relaunch, effective June 12.

 In Stage One, the number of faithful gathering for the Divine Liturgy and other liturgical services was limited to no more than 50 people or one third of normal worship space, whichever is smaller, and whichever ensures that physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) was maintained.

 As of June 12, Stage Two removes the cap for gatherings from churches and places of worship. The number of faithful permitted to attend church services is now regulated solely by the number of people that a church building can accommodate while still ensuring physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) per household.

 Parishes may now proceed to increasing the number of faithful in attendance at any given liturgical service, while still adhering to all other requirements outlined in the May 21, 2020 *Directives for the Re-opening of Churches and the Resumption of Public Liturgical Services*.

 Understandably, an increased number of faithful in attendance may require additional volunteers, greeters, ushers, Eucharistic ministers, proper sanitation, etc.

 As we prepare to “welcome home” even more of our parishioners, Pastors, together with their Parish Pastoral Councils, must calculate the actual number that their church may accommodate while still maintaining physical distancing requirements.

 Let us remind ourselves that, while an increased number of our faithful in attendance at liturgical services is very much welcomed, the pandemic is not over. It is still critical that we understand the potential for the spread of COVID-19 among our faithful and take steps to minimize the risk of spread, especially among high risk populations within our congregations.

The health and safety of everyone is first and foremost.

We will need to continue to do what we are doing, namely:

* if you are sick or are vulnerable, you should stay home;
* follow public health measures,
* practice physical distancing and good hygiene; and
* continue to act responsibly.

 With gratitude for your patience and cooperation, I assure you that your well-being, both spiritual and physical, is of paramount importance as we take these further steps to resume public participation in our liturgical services.

 May the blessings of the All Holy Trinity be upon you and your family.

Bishop David

Eparchial Bishop