

SPOILER ALERT

Just when some believe COVID-19 is over, we hear of the 7th wave!

It has long been anticipated that we would experience the next wave of COVID-19 in the fall; now Dr. Lynora Saxinger, an infectious disease specialist at the University of Alberta, and others in the medical community, are predicting that we may now be on the verge of the next wave!

There are early signs in the waste water of our larger cities of another upswing in Alberta and that we will soon follow Ontario, Quebec and BC which are already battling increased hospitalizations. In Ontario, there are 65 long-term care homes and 51 retirement homes currently reporting outbreaks! Those aged 80+ are experiencing the sharpest increase in cases; the dominant strain appears to be the BA.5 variant.

It is anticipated that the wave will lead to a lot of very mild cases but we can't be sure. I would suggest that there are many in the public who consider the less severe strains as no worse than influenza. The issue is however, that we don't know of long-term effects and secondly, from the experiences of past waves, we see that once the hospitalization rates increase, often surgeries and treatments are postponed.

Let's continue to do our part by being vigilant. At Central, we plan to continue with our suggested four basic pillars for the summer:



Respiratory Hygiene

- wear a mask (masks are available when entering the church)

Hand Hygiene

- frequent hand washing / sanitizing (sanitizing stations are located throughout the building)

Physical Distancing

- keep 2 meters distance (when sitting in the sanctuary, consider sitting 2 meters from the next person in your pew and two pews behind the person in front of you)

Not Congregating

- prior to and following the worship services (we have purposefully removed coat racks from the sanctuary, have reduced access time to the building before and after the services and do not provide coffee service in our furniture free Hospitality Lounge – all measures to deter gathering).

The province has not signalled that any new public health restrictions are pending however, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization has warned that the virus will pose a challenge this fall.

Vaccines are a critical, effective and safe way to limit the spread of COVID-19. As a reminder, in Alberta, you are eligible to receive your fourth dose of vaccine if you are aged 70+, First Nations, Metis or Inuit people aged 65+ or immunocompromised individuals and have had the third dose administered five months ago. As the virus continues to spread, it is anticipated that this fall the fourth dose will be available to more Albertans. In addition, children aged five or older can book their first dose.

Blessings for a safe summer as we learn to live with the virus,