

## **COVID-19 Vaccination Policy of St. Andrew's Ukrainian Orthodox Sobor Parish**

At the Board of Management meeting held on December 14, 2021, the Board accepted a motion to develop a Covid-19 Vaccination Policy, which, prior to implementation, would require the Blessing of His Grace, Bishop Ilarion, Bishop of Edmonton and the Western Eparchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada.

### **Covid-19 Vaccination Policy**

Effective March 8, 2022, the Covid-19 vaccination policy is implemented in St. Andrew's Ukrainian Orthodox Sobor Parish.

On a day of a church worship service, all worshippers and especially the individuals listed below can:

1. Be in close proximity to others despite best intentions, where any applicable restrictions of physical distancing may and can easily be violated albeit for short periods of time, or
2. Easily touch objects that the attending worshippers also touch and that can be a source of cross-contamination, or
3. Be an example to others.

Therefore, in order for those who wish to worship or meet in our Parish to be as safe as possible, we strongly encourage that all available vaccines and boosters for COVID-19 be received, adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) be used, and appropriate procedures be developed and followed. In general, without vaccines, humans are either more likely to become sick or more likely to be hospitalized.

This vaccine policy is especially important to be followed by these individuals:

- a. Hierarchs/clergy/deacons that serve in the altar
- b. Palamari
- c. Cantor and guest cantors
- d. Altar boys
- e. Greeters
- f. Ushers
- g. Members of the Board of Management
- h. Those who assist in any fashion with the distribution of the Eucharist, preparation of Blessed Water and Oil.

### **Rationale for Having a Vaccination Policy**

1. If you become sick, there is the possibility that you can cause harm to others by infecting others to become sick. If you are hospitalized when it could have been avoided, our health care system of finite size now has reduced capacity because of your required care, which could cause others to not receive timely treatment (as occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic in some cases causing death to some untreated individuals). Receiving vaccines shows care and love for each other. Please see the statement by His All-Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew about the commandment to love one's neighbour.
2. This policy is in line with the requirements identified in the UOCC published "Directives and Recommendations Regarding Vaccination and Attendance at Church Services" which takes effect February 1, 2022.
3. Orthodox spiritual leaders have commented on the need for people to be vaccinated.
  - a. His All-Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew stated the following in an interview with [ukrinform.ua](http://ukrinform.ua).

Ukrinform.ua Questions: *The world community is actively fighting the coronavirus. In the Orthodox world, there are those who oppose vaccination, wearing masks, and maintaining social distance. What is the attitude of the Mother Church towards vaccination? Were you and those around you vaccinated?*

Patriarch Bartholomew's Response: *The current great crisis in the field of healthcare affects Orthodox Christians along with all of humankind. Of course, we are being criticized for dealing with and fighting against the pandemic by supporting the development of useful vaccines and other countermeasures. However, the refusal of vaccination and other protective measures is irrational and unjustified by theological or scientific criteria. I have said from the beginning that the pandemic threatens our faithful, but not our faith. It is a fact that a large number of believers who refused protective measures have become victims of this virus. That is why it is unacceptable in the face of so many victims and so much suffering to deny the existence of a pandemic, to regard it as created by someone, or to spread conspiracy theories. Unfortunately, this attitude shows indifference to others. However, anything that contradicts the commandment to love one's neighbour cannot be the will of God. The Church of Constantinople encourages the faithful to consult with their doctors and to vaccinate according to their instructions. Naturally, all of us at the Phanar, including myself, have been vaccinated.*

- b. His All-Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew stated the following in his Christmas 2021 encyclical:

*In this past year, too, the pandemic of the Covid-19 coronavirus has troubled humankind. We give glory to the God of mercy, who strengthened the specialists and scientists to develop effective vaccines and other medications in order to confront this crisis, and we encourage all faithful who have yet to be vaccinated to do so and everyone to adhere to the protective measures by the health authorities. Science, to the extent that operates as a minister of man, is a priceless gift by God. We must gratefully accept this gift and not be misled by irresponsible voices of ignorant and self-proclaimed as representatives of God and of the authentic faith "spiritual advisors", who, nevertheless, lamentably invalidate themselves through the absence of love for their brethren, whose lives they expose to grave danger.*

- c. His Grace, Bishop Ilarion, Bishop of Edmonton and the Western Eparchy of the UOCC and Locum Tenens of the Metropolitan Church of the UOCC stated in His opening remarks at the 61<sup>st</sup> Western Eparchy Assembly, that in His conversations with His Grace, Bishop David of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton, both agreed that all clergy should be vaccinated, otherwise they will not be able to fulfil their duties.
4. At a time of a crisis and especially now, in the midst of a coronavirus pandemic, all members need to care about the health and safety of not only of themselves, but also for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The Board is responsible for insuring that worshippers attending a service are provided with the safest environment reasonably possible and that their health would not be unduly compromised or jeopardized.
  5. Specifically regarding, at the time of writing this policy, Covid-19 and its variants are still with us. The message from physicians, scientists, and provincial health and government officials is that everyone should be vaccinated unless there is some compelling medical reason for them not to receive the vaccine. And, to reduce the spread the Covid-19 virus, the Board previously implemented various measures to reduce the possibility of transmitting Covid-19 amongst attending worshippers. In the future, the Board of Management may introduce measures as deemed appropriate to reduce the possibility of virus transmissibility.