

Update from the Convening Consistory for Synod Redeemer (2022)

Greetings in the name of the Lord.

The planning committee for Synod Redeemer has again reviewed the current COVID restrictions as they relate to our meeting together as churches at Synod. As has been the case throughout this pandemic, there remains uncertainty about what restrictions will be in place by the time of our meeting. However, we believe that even if the restrictions remain as they are today, which may be a reasonable expectation, it will be possible to host an in-person Synod next June. Having made this decision, we wish to bring the matter to the churches.

It may be helpful to remember the challenge that faces our churches in meeting as Synod, whether that meeting be in Canada or in the USA. Regardless of where the Synod meets, some delegates will have to cross the border between our countries. Until relatively recently, movement across our shared border has been severely restricted. Only essential workers were permitted to cross the border and even then, they were required to quarantine, sometimes both after they crossed the border and after they returned. In the past, persons coming into Canada were required to quarantine for 14 days. Similar rules were in place in the US. Each State of the USA had its own quarantine regulations, but many were similar to those imposed by the Federal Government of Canada. By way of example, New York at one time also required a 14-day quarantine for travellers into the state. This meant, in terms of Synod, that any delegates coming to Canada would have had to enter two weeks before the Synod to participate in the Synod. It also meant that had we moved our location for Synod to the American side of the border, we would have faced similar restrictions. Even after some of the States eliminated these restrictions, Canadian delegates would have had to quarantine for 14 days once they returned home, and this only if the government allowed delegates across the border, something that has been very unlikely during much of these past two years. Thus, for much of this pandemic, had we held Synod anywhere in North America, a significant portion of the delegates, if they could cross the border, would have had to commit to three weeks for our meeting: two weeks of quarantine and one week of Synod. This was one of the reasons we chose to cancel Synod these past two years. Thankfully, circumstances have changed.

While the US government continues to limit the movement of Canadians across the border, the Canadian government has made significant changes. Those changes, however, come with conditions. As it currently stands, fully vaccinated Americans may travel into Canada, if they show a negative COVID test taken no more than 72 hours before departure. Unfortunately, unvaccinated Americans are still required to take a rapid test upon arrival, and to quarantine for at least 14 days, taking a second test again on day 8. More information regarding travelling into Canada can be found on the following link: <https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/covid-vaccinated-travellers-entering-canada#enter>.

It is our hope that these regulations will have changed by the time Synod is held. However, as we have all come to realize, we cannot anticipate what will happen over the next 6-9 months. And though this is not an ideal circumstance under which to hold Synod, it remains for us the only meaningful way to hold our now twice delayed Synod. Moving the location of our Synod does not solve our problem since whatever restrictions exist will affect both sides of the border. Waiting until we are certain that unvaccinated delegates will be able to cross the border without quarantine prevents us from making the necessary preparations that must now begin for our meeting.

While we certainly hope and pray that matters will be sufficiently changed over the next number of months that these restrictions will be significantly altered, if not eliminated altogether, at this moment we must decide about whether we can reasonably hold an in-person meeting of Synod. We believe that the government of Canada's decision to allow vaccinated Americans permission to enter this country without needing to quarantine makes it possible for us host our Synod.

As we continue to deal with many unknowns, we trust in our Heavenly Father who knows all things and pray that He will guide us in our efforts, to the glory of his Name.