

Report of the Diocese of Montreal, Ecclesiastical Province of Canada
April 22, 2021

The Diocese of Montreal continues to adapt to ever-changing provincial government health regulations during the Covid-19 Pandemic. In-person church services were cancelled as of March 16, 2020 although a few congregations had chosen to stop before that. The Synod office has been closed since that date and staff have continued to work almost exclusively from home. We established a protocol for parishes to put in place once it would be deemed safe enough to hold in-person services again. Some congregations have yet to apply for permission to reopen and have been content to stay online. Others have held regular in-person services as soon as they were able to and have also continued broadcasting them online. The Montreal island parishes have been in the Province of Quebec's most restricted zone (red) and some of the other parts are in areas which were initially less affected and have enjoyed fewer restrictions. This has also evolved. At time of writing, the new variants of concern and vaccinations are of great interest. We are hopeful that we are moving toward a healthy summer but we continue to exercise caution and care for one another.

Baptisms

2020 – 46	2019 – 138
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Confirmations

2020 – 5	2019 – 26
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Marriages

2020 – 29	2019 – 56
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Funerals

2020 – 145	2019 – 208
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Easter

2020 – 11,447	2019 – 5,242
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Christmas

2020 – 6,940	2019 – 5,912
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Number of people on the rolls

2020 – 6,674	2019 – 7,039
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We are hopeful for many reasons: We began online worship in many forms (Zoom, Go to Meeting, Facebook Live, YouTube live or pre-recorded, telephone conference calls and Uber Conference) and have found that we have better engagement with many people in our congregations. We have continued to grow and develop our expertise and have been greatly helped by our staff in our knowledge and use of Digital Communications. We have been able to better reach the local community and gather them together in ways that have not been possible; more inclusion of physically limited members of the parish and across congregational boundaries in shared ministries.

- EFM and Revive successfully transferred to online meetings
- The work of congregational development broadened to meeting online, and our congregational development officer partnered in an initiative with NS\PEI in “Pew and Beyond” on Facebook Live and YouTube.
- Montreal has finally developed a new French web site.
- The Montreal Diocesan Theological College (Montreal Dio) and United Theological College are working on a strategic alliance, sharing the strengths that each one has. Convocation was held online in May 2020 and will be again in 2021 with Elizabeth May as this year’s guest speaker.
- Recently liquidated assets allowed us to offer temporary relief from assessments to parishes and benefit from the federal government wage subsidy.
- Clericus meetings are stronger and easier to attend now that they are meeting online as are Archdeaconry consultations, Diocesan Synod, Diocesan Council, Warden’s days, Clergy conference, Clergy Lenten retreat, Spiritual Directors meetings and sessions; Various workshops about digital communications have been offered and saved on YouTube to be viewed anytime. Montreal Dio has shifted to online courses and made continuing education for lay and ordained people more widely accessible. Theology in the Laurentians, Lay Readers trainings
- A new food security ministry began during pandemic to help people in an area that had need but was not being served. Members of several parishes

participated and the ministry continues. Other food security and ministries serving the needy found ways to pivot and adapt their outreach.

We have experienced “rejoicing in hope” at difficult times during this pandemic as we have witnessed the creativity of our clergy and the engagement and leadership of the laity in offering training and worship online and in finding ways to stay in touch and care for one another. A number of people have been growing and learning as disciples during this time.

People are working together, and there is a lot more cooperation in sharing gifts and abilities and less worry about parish boundaries; churches are meeting faithfully even on the telephone! people are staying for long Zoom trainings; there has been genuine caring for each other and making sacrifices for the good of the whole.

The Provincial House of Bishops has met more regularly during the pandemic and has been of much more support to one another, especially over the loss of Bishop Geoff and the arrivals of Bishops Sam and Sandra. We were unable to be present at their consecrations but look forward to when we meet in person at the House of Bishops. The support and respect for one another is real and accessible. We can also meet anytime that works instead of holding to traditional opportunities to meet. We have been able to co-operate between colleagues over the internet and do so much more than we could have asked or imagined.

We need to pivot for financial and environmental reasons and give up meeting in person. It is much more comfortable to stay home and not spend so much time and money in travel. If necessary, we should lobby our governments for high-speed internet access or consider subsidizing people who need help connecting.