



# Diocese of Kootenay

July 1, 2020

## **The Bishop's Policy for Re-establishing In-Person Worship: Phase 1**

In-person worship may begin on **July 12, 2020** if all the following requirements are met.

### **We are the Body of Christ:**

The overarching value behind this policy is Safety, so we must proceed with an abundance of caution. As members of the Body of Christ, we cherish and honour each member. We care for each other. We are called to love our neighbours as ourselves. The need to protect ourselves and our neighbours from the spread of the Covid19 arises from this love. We must protect the vulnerable.

Another operative value is that the Body of Christ is inclusive. The choice to return to in-person worship must also make significant and meaningful efforts to continue to provide electronic forms of worship for those who will be excluded by in-person worship.

**Timing:** The return to in-person worship is possible at this time only because the spread of the virus is slowed in the Interior Health Region. The timing of a second wave of the virus is uncertain. When and if the number of cases rises we will again suspend in-person worship. Through all of this we will continue to comply with directives from the Provincial Health authorities.

The earliest date for in-person worship in the Diocese of Kootenay is July 12, 2020, and in order to begin in-person worship, this **policy document** must be sent in to the Bishop a week ahead of the planned date for holding in-person worship, signed by both incumbent and wardens.

The practice of in-person worship in the Diocese will be re-evaluated month by month.

It is our hope, of course, that in the future we will return to celebrating Eucharist, and we will continue to work toward this. For Phase 2 of returning to in-person worship, we will develop a detailed policy of how Eucharist may be celebrated. This will be in gradual stages, firstly communion with bread only; the return to the common cup may not happen until the population has been vaccinated.

At this time, we are not celebrating the Eucharist.

**Context:** The current scientific data is that the population over the age of 65 years has a much higher mortality rate with this virus, and this vulnerability increases with age. This vulnerable age-group is a significant portion of our church membership. The vulnerable population also includes anyone who is immune-compromised. With the ongoing strong encouragement from health authorities that the vulnerable population continue to self-isolate, it is expected that many of our members will not return to in-person worship at this time.

Therefore, every congregation must continue to offer or make available some form of worship for those who cannot or choose not to return to in-person worship.

Pastoral care by phone must continue to happen.

### **Optional Return:**

I expect that most parishes will not move to in-person worship at this time. This policy will outline requirements for returning to in-person worship in the Diocese of Kootenay, **should this be the wish of a parish and if the parish is able to meet all the requirements listed below.** The decision to return will be made by the incumbent and the parish council together. It is okay to decide not to have in-person worship at this time. For many churches it will be impossible or inadvisable to offer in-person worship now.

This is not a one-size-fits-all policy. Factors that will need to go into a parish decision to return to in-person worship will include whether the parish is in an urban or rural area, the vulnerable age category of clergy and parishioners, the size of the church building and whether physical distancing is possible in that building, and the resources and capacity of the parish.

Parishes may choose to have only one or two outdoor or in-person worships over the course of the summer. It is not necessary to organize in-person worship every Sunday.

The timing in each parish must take into consideration the needs of the clergy to take a vacation this summer. These last months have been a time of immense stress for leadership, and the timing of this return to in-person worship must not add to this stress.

### **Alerting the Bishop of intention to offer in-person worship:**

**In order to hold in-person worship, the parish must send to the Bishop a copy of this policy document, signed by the incumbent and wardens indicating they are able to provide for all the mandatory requirements, a week before the first in-person worship is planned.**

## **Mandatory requirements for returning to in-person worship:**

The parish must comply with all government restrictions and all of the following:

- Fewer than 50 people at each event (or less than 1/3 of building capacity), including clergy and staff.
- People who are feeling the least bit unwell are asked to stay home.
- People in the vulnerable population, those in the over 65 age group and those who are immune-compromised, are strongly discouraged from attending.
- People must be seated at least two metres apart. People from the same household bubble may sit together.
- The number of clergy, servers and readers will be kept to a minimum to allow for proper physical distancing in the chancel.
- If your sanctuary cannot safely hold the whole congregation and still maintain required physical distancing, you will need to set up a system of pre-registration to limit the numbers.
- No singing, or one soloist only at least 5 metres distant from everyone else.
- Everyone entering the building is required to wear a mask. Individuals may bring their own reusable, non-medical mask, and put it on before entering the building. Disposable masks must be available at the entrance to the church in case a person does not have one or forgets their own. The presider, preacher, and reader, will not have to be wearing masks during the service, but they will be wearing masks at all other times.
- Worship must be short, less than 45 minutes.
  
- To help ensure physical distancing, there must be one designated entrance to the church building and one designated exit.
- There will be hand sanitizer dispensers at the entrance and exit and visibly available throughout the sanctuary. Everyone entering the church will be asked to sanitize their hands.
- The building must be well ventilated. Windows and doors must be left open.
- The hall or other rooms in the building will be closed to the public.
- The washrooms will be closed to the public, **except** in case of emergencies. There will need to be an attendant to sanitize the washroom after each use.
- Remove unnecessary items from the building which people might touch and then would have to be sanitized. Either hymnbooks and prayer books are removed from the pews altogether and a paper bulletin is used and then recycled, or the books would need to be sanitized after each use. A laminated order of service that can be sanitized could work.
- There will be no handing around of the collection plate, and whoever handles the envelopes after must be vigilant about hand washing.
- In order to help ensure the health and safety of everyone there must be thorough sanitizing of the building after each service.
- Mandatory Sanitization Processes – see Resources section below.
  
- Everyone attending a service will be asked to provide contact information. The BC health authorities require each gathering to keep detailed contact information about

everyone attending at any gathering and how they can be contacted. This is to help with contact tracing and tracking in case someone attending becomes sick with the virus. This list includes name, telephone number and email address. This list must be kept for 30 days for tracing and tracking purposes. There is an app available for this listed in the Resources section below.

- During the summer months, outside worship is strongly encouraged as this minimizes the risk. Physical distancing and all other applicable requirements listed above pertain.
- Signs about hand-washing and physical distancing need to be placed at entrances, washrooms and other prominent places (see Resources below).
- This safety plan must be posted on the doors and sent to the congregation if you choose to have in-person worship.

### **Social Events:**

Small social gatherings outside are encouraged. These must maintain all the protocols of physical distancing and sanitization. People must bring their own food and beverages. See resource on Food Safety and Food Distribution below.

Fundraising events must comply with BC Worksafe regulations – see Resources below.

**Building Rentals:** the current policy remains in effect (see COVID-19 Directives on Diocese of Kootenay website.)

### **Resources:**

Cleaning and Disinfecting [CleaningDisinfecting\\_PublicSettings.pdf](#)

App for Contact Tracing:

Springfield Funeral Home in Kelowna recently came across a Software product that will assist any organization register and record attendance at services or events. They have been able to help a few churches implement this and the process is running smoothly. The software is free, user friendly, easy to implement and maintain and is separate and independent of other programs. If you would like more information please call Joanne at 1-778-363-0818 or [joannebonk@springfieldfuneralhome.com](mailto:joannebonk@springfieldfuneralhome.com)

Physical Distancing Poster [COVID19\\_PhysicalDistancingPoster.pdf](#)

Handwashing Poster [COVID19\\_Handwashing Poster\\_MD offices.pdf](#)

For People who are Sick or Self-Isolating [COVID19\\_DoNotEnterPoster.pdf](#)

Food Safety and Food Distribution

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/food-safety>

Fundraising Events <https://www.worksafebc.com/en>

BC Centre for Disease Control - the most up-to-date and reliable source of information regarding government restrictions and requirements.

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/resources-at-a-glance>

This document lists those who are high risk:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Epid/CD%20Manual/Chapter%201%20-%20CDC/COVID-19-Handout-chronic-disease.pdf>

We have used the following sources:

- British Columbia Centre for Disease Control [www.bccdc.ca](http://www.bccdc.ca)
- Worksafe BC <https://www.worksafebc.com/en>
- Christ Church Cathedral, Vancouver [www.thecathedral.ca](http://www.thecathedral.ca)
- The Diocese of New Westminster <https://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/diocesan-resources/covid-19-reopening/news>
- The Diocese of Yukon <https://anglican.yukon.net/>
- Meetings of The Provincial House of Bishops of BC and Yukon