



# The Re-opening of Churches in the Diocese of New Westminster

May 20, 2020



May 20, 2020

Dear People of the Diocese of New Westminster

Greetings and peace to you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

As I think about our gradual return to worship in our church buildings, I'm reminded of the many stories in the Hebrew Scriptures about journey and return. Whether it's the story of Abraham setting out from Haran, the story of the Israelites crossing the wilderness on their way to the promised land, or the story of Ruth and Naomi, the theme of journey is a central way that the Hebrew Scriptures show us what it means to be person of faith along the twists and turns of our lives.

When it comes to the theme of return, however, one story from the Hebrew Scriptures dominates---the return of the Israelites to Jerusalem from their captivity in Babylon. While you and I have certainly not experienced what they did--a forced removal from their homeland, the destruction of the center of their religious identity and the suffering that comes in captivity--through this pandemic, you and I have surely experienced dislocation, loss and pain.

And so what can we learn from this story?

First, in that during their captivity, the exiles lost what they had come to rely on to make meaning of much in their lives, their return was not simple or easy. It happened in phases, with different groups returning at different times and with some never returning. Secondly, the exiles' return meant coming to terms with disrupted expectations upon their return. Things were not going to go back to "normal" in that those returning were not able to rebuild their temple or their lives exactly as they had existed before. And, third, the return from exile meant that religious life, itself, would be different. For the Jewish people were changed by the losses they had suffered and resilience they had discovered in themselves.

As followers of Jesus, we know this story. This is not just because the stories from the Hebrew Scriptures are a part of our story. Through the life, death, resurrection of Jesus, we understand what it means to be a part of God's story as enacted in Christ Jesus: a story in which we move

and are moved from fear to trust, from isolation to community, from disorientation to reorientation and from death to new life. This is what we draw on as we take steps to gather together again after a time of confusion, fear and loss.

What you will find in this document is a phased approach to restarting in-person gatherings in our churches. It is an approach that aims to care for people, communities, and each other after a time of remaining in our homes for the sake of stemming the spread of COVID-19.

Our goals include:

- Offering hope and guidance to our communities in a time of uncertainty and changing news about what is permissible from a health perspective at any given time.
- Continuing to provide our people and communities with parish-based pastoral care now and in the months to come.
- Providing for the continuity of prayer and worship, whether people are gathered in person or online.
- Continuing to protect the most vulnerable among us by limiting contact and continuing and/or initiating practices to slow the spread of infectious disease

All of what you will read here will be dependent on further and ongoing recommendations from the Provincial Health Officer and will typically reflect an abundance of caution in its approach given how many of our parishioners are vulnerable in the face of this pandemic. What this means is that **the way forward will not be immediate and may not be linear.**

Please read this document thoroughly as you work through what your parish may do at every phase of this plan and as you complete your application to re-open. **Remember that your parish does not have to move to a particular phase on the same timing as other parishes do, but you may not move to the next phase until my office informs you that you may do so.** Every parish, its buildings, its capacities and its leadership are different. **Each parish, therefore, using this document must discern the appropriate actions and timing for itself in terms of when to reopen its building and what activities to offer.** If you have any questions about this document or the process for re-opening, please contact your Regional Archdeacon.

You and all the parishes are in my prayers during this season of many decisions and many opportunities as we work through how best to support our parishes, our people and our communities in this unprecedented time.

In Christ,  
+ Melissa

# A Phased Plan for the Re-Opening of Churches

## Introduction

This plan was created as a collaborative effort. That effort included Archbishop Melissa Skelton, the Archdeacons of the Diocese who collected questions and issues from clergy, the Synod Office staff, especially The Rev. Tellison Glover and Executive Archdeacon Douglas Fenton, The Rev. Philippa Segrave-Price, Chair of the Mission and Ministry Committee, Chancellor George Cadman and Vice Chancellor Kevin Smith. Thank you, everyone, who contributed to this plan and to the questionnaire/application appended here.

The plan contains the following phases and materials as listed below. **The Archbishop's Office will communicate when it is possible for the parishes of the Diocese to move into each phase.** As noted above: each Parish is not *required* to move to the next phase – but no Parish may move to the next phase in its re-opening without the permission of the Archbishop's Office.

- **Phase I:** A Time of Hiatus (the time we are currently in)
- **Phase II:** Beginning Re-entry
- **Phase III:** Deeper In-Person Participation
- **Phase IV:** Full In-Person Gathering with New Learning
- **Other:** Summer Programming
- **Appendix A:** Questions for Priests-in-Charge, Church Wardens and Trustees
- **Appendix B:** Questionnaire/Application for Re-Opening a Parish Church (Relates to both Phases II and III)

We recognize that all ministry is contextual. This plan articulates practices that fall into categories of “requirement” and “recommendation.” Requirements are mandatory and enforceable by the Archbishop and are listed using the phrases “*must...*” and “*...are prohibited*”. Recommendations, listed below use permissive phrases such as, “*we advise,*” “*we encourage,*” or “*we recommend*” in that they are best practices and may be modified as appropriate to your local context under the authority of the “Responsible Persons”<sup>1</sup> of the Parish as defined in the Constitution and Canons. In most cases, those will be the Priest-in-Charge and the Church Wardens, together with Trustees (in the case of incorporated Parishes).

As we continue to follow requirements and recommendations for safety, please remember to pray for the ill and recovering, for the grieving, and for the lonely. Also pray for researchers, medical professionals, health policy experts, front line workers, and for those who clean and stock and ship. Finally, pray for each other - that we may continue to be a people of hope in the midst of this unfolding situation.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Canon 9. The Canons are available at <https://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/diocesan-resources/parish-resources/pages/canons-constitution-and-regulations-of-the-diocese>

Contact your Regional Archdeacon with any questions or clarifications. The Questionnaire/ Application to reopen in Phases II and III should be submitted to Bill Siksay at the Synod Office [bsiksay@vancouver.anglican.ca](mailto:bsiksay@vancouver.anglican.ca) . Once the application is reviewed, any comments/changes will be communicated to you. With these comments/changes addressed, your plan for re-opening will be approved.

# Phase I: A Time of Hiatus

## Overview

All Parishes in the Diocese are currently (as of May 20, 2020) in Phase I.

During Phase I, consistent with the Suspension of In-Person Worship and Parish and Diocesan Activities set out in the Archbishop's Communique #6 of March 17, 2020,<sup>2</sup> all worship except for the recording or live-streaming of worship must be online. All formation and meetings are online. Church offices may remain open if safe practices are observed. Those practices include, for example, frequent cleaning and sanitization of common areas and surfaces, implementing appropriate physical distancing measures, and avoiding in-person meetings or appointments with visitors. The safe practices which are appropriate for each church office will vary from Parish to Parish. Food programs may open with the completion of an application and the permission of the Archbishop's office.

## Phase I Worship Requirements and Recommendations

Churches are prohibited from in-person worship. We strongly recommend that parishes record online participation numbers in their vestry books with a notation that the numbers reflect online participants.

We advise and encourage all parishes to find means of gathering using online tools, including but not limited to:

- Sunday Worship (Either Holy Eucharist or some version of the Divine Office or worship focusing on readings, sermon, prayers and music)
- Divine Office during the week (Morning Prayer, Mid-day Prayer, Evening Prayer, Compline or Night Prayers)
- Other forms of prayer (Centering Prayer, praying through music etc.)

## Requirements for Other Services

- Funerals with ten attendees or fewer (including the officiant) are permitted, while following physical distancing guidelines
- Weddings with five attendees or fewer (including the couple to be married, and the officiant) are permitted, while following physical distancing guidelines
- Baptisms should be done on an emergency-only basis. Please notify your Regional Archdeacon.

---

<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/news/suspension-of-in-person-worship-and-parish-and-diocesan-activities>

## Filming and Live-streaming Eucharistic Worship

The filming/live-streaming maintains physical distancing at all times. The number of participants in the filming or the live-streaming of Eucharistic worship is limited to ten.

These participants may include:

- One celebrant and, where possible, a deacon. If the participation of a deacon is not possible, include one lay server who functions as the second person in the Eucharist, the one who is the other participant and responder on film.
- One lay person who both reads the lessons and leads the prayers
- A preacher who either delivers the sermon as a part of the liturgy or records it separately, with the sermon uploaded and edited into the liturgy
- A musician or musicians physically distant from one another (if any singers are involved, they should be situated further from each other and from other participants than even the normal two-metre physical distancing guidelines. To reduce risk, any singers should be faced away from others.)
- Those filming or live-streaming the worship
- An altar guild person or sacristan as needed

### Specific Requirements

- Bread and wine are both consecrated, with the celebrant receiving the bread and wine and the deacon or lay server receiving only the bread.
- Physical distancing is observed at all times, which means that the deacon/lay server receives bread from the altar, not from the hands of the celebrant
- Proper sanitization of the space and the vessels occurs before and after the Eucharist
- Celebrant and deacon or server wash and sanitize their hands before the beginning of the liturgy, before the distribution of communion and after the conclusion of the liturgy.
- Altar Guild/Sacristans sanitize the vessels and their hands before and after the liturgy to protect those serving in the liturgy and themselves

## Phase I Formation, Fellowship, Fund-raising Activities and Pastoral Care

During Phase I, all formation, fellowship and fund-raising activities must move to delivery online or by telephone. All pastoral care must not take place through in person meetings.

- Bible Studies and other small group formation must be online.
- Fellowship (coffee hours, socials, lunches, dinners, interest group gatherings) must be online.
- Fund-raising Activities: Encouraging on-going giving to the parish's operating fund or fund-raising for special reasons must move online or be conducted by phone.
- Pastoral Care must not take place through in-person meetings (may be in the form of letter writing, cards, telephoning, conference calls, etc.)
- In-person visiting in care homes is not permitted.

## Phase I Office Building Use Guidelines

In Phase I, staff members must be permitted to work from home, if they wish. While some staff may wish to work from Parish premises, especially the immunocompromised, parents of children, and those older than 60 should be discouraged from doing so. We advise that the mode of transportation a parish employee or volunteer uses to travel to work be taken into consideration in terms of their working in the office or from home.

In-office functions must still be minimal, focusing effort and activity only on essential operations.

Any staff members or volunteers working from church-owned buildings must continue to follow physical distancing and sanitization guidelines, including:

- Maintaining two meters of separation between individuals
- Regular hand-washing and sanitizer use
- Regular disinfection of common surfaces including doorknobs, countertops, bathrooms (if used at all) and office electronics. Bathrooms must be sanitized after each use.

Parish Council or other teams/ministry committee meetings must be held on line.

## Phase I Service and Outreach Initiative Requirements

- All in-person service or outreach ministries must gain permission from the Archbishop's Office to operate during this time. Specific guidelines and the process for approval for food ministries can be found [here](#).
- Any outside group using parish spaces for food ministries must agree to follow safety guidelines and agree to indemnify the parish. The form for this is found [here](#).

## Phase I Building Use by User Groups and Rentals

- During this time the use of church buildings by all user groups including 12-step groups are suspended
- Rental tenants have been invited to suspend their operations. They are required to sign a waiver should they decide to continue operating.
- Licensed Child-care providers have been recognized by Provincial Health Authorities as providing an essential service. Guidance from Provincial Health Authorities has contemplated that such providers may, or may not, choose to stay open. To the extent child-care providers using church property elect to continue operating, the Diocesan Office recommends asking providers to sign a form confirming that they have satisfied themselves that their activities are not prohibited; that they are making their own informed decision to continue operating, and that they will not seek to hold the Diocese or the Parish liable for any loss or damage arising as a result of Covid-19. Please contact the Synod Office for further information.



## Phase I Other Recommendations for Gathering while Separated

We advise using digital tools like video conferencing and/or conference calls for routine meetings of leaders and any committee or team meetings during this time.

We advise identifying a method by which your leadership will continue to engage your non-online parishioners, whether by phone, through online means (including by providing training and assistance to assist those unfamiliar with online interaction communicate by those means), or through other means.

We advise that during this phase, Priests-in-Charge and lay leaders begin planning for the next phase.

# Phase II: Beginning Re-Entry

## Overview

During this phase, the parish begins the process of re-opening, concentrating its efforts on sanitization of spaces, limited in-person worship (no celebration of the Holy Eucharist with congregation present), beginning or continuing food programs, potentially reopening childcare operations (if not already open), and more fully opening up office operations.

**Phase II may be short in duration, that is, 2-4 weeks as parishes get themselves ready for a greater array of in-person gatherings and the work and care that this will mean. The Archbishop's Office will notify parishes when moving to Phase III is permissible. In that many of our parishioners and some of our Priests-in-Charge or other clergy are vulnerable individuals as defined by the BC Provincial Health Officer, re-opening might not be appropriate for every parish during this phase.** We are aware that Phase II is a very cautious step forward. We acknowledge that some of you will be frustrated at the perceived lack of progress from Phase 1 to Phase II. However, as we try and understand the implications of worshipping together, we feel that caution is the best path to take.

Before you choose to re-open, the Priest-in-Charge, Church Wardens and Trustees (if any) should discuss the questions listed in [Appendix A](#). Once these conversations have taken place, please complete the questionnaire/application in [Appendix B](#) (that relates to both [Phases II and III](#)) and return your application to Bill Siksai at the Synod Office [bsiksai@vancouver.anglican.ca](mailto:bsiksai@vancouver.anglican.ca) to receive any comments and to be given permission to implement your re-opening. **You will need to submit your application at least 10 days prior to the date you want to reopen.**

## Phase II Preparing the Church for Re-Entry

Before any re-entry, the parish must provide for a thorough cleaning of the entire church building, including pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, stair railings, and microphones. Please see the current cleaning guidelines from BCCDC.

To the extent practicable, we recommend considering removing all non-essential items from rooms so that there are fewer surfaces to touch.

We recommend posting signs and making announcements about non-contact greetings and reminders to refrain from shaking hands and hugging.

We recommend communicating with parishioners before they arrive about the preparations you have done for their re-entry and reiterating that, if they are sick or are of a vulnerable population, they should stay home and join online, if available, through your parish or another.

[Useful posters related to handwashing, physical distancing, etc. are available through the BCCDC website.](#)

## Phase II - Worship Requirements and Recommendations

In this phase parishes may begin offering in-person worship gatherings of no more than 50 people, including celebrant(s), while adhering to the following requirements and recommendations.

### Requirements for In-person Worship

- During this phase *publically* sharing in the Holy Eucharist in person is prohibited. You may wish to offer Holy Eucharist online, using the guidelines for filming or livestreaming described in Phase I (limited to 10 or fewer people and two people receiving Communion).
- No liturgical processions unless the processions can accommodate physical distancing among those processing and with members of the congregation.
- There is no physical touching during any portion of in-person worship. This includes physical sharing the Peace if used at this time (although exchanging the Greeting of Peace, without physical contact, is encouraged).
- There is no passing of an offering plate through the pews. To limit contact, parishioners may offer financial gifts online or to a stationary plate as they come in or during worship.
- Households must sit at least two metres apart from other households or individuals, 360°, if gathered for in-person worship.
- The congregation and the officiant are required to refrain from singing when gathered for in-person worship during this phase. Singing is among the riskier behaviours when it comes to spreading the virus. Additionally, no wind or brass instruments may be used in worship. If a congregation wishes to have a cantor or soloist (singer), in addition to instrumental music, that person must be appropriately screened in terms of their health<sup>3</sup> and must be situated further from each other and from other worship participants than even the normal two-metre physical distancing guidelines. To reduce risk, singers should be turned away from others.

### Requirements for Gathering Size and Contact in Worship

- During this phase we must limit any in-person worship gatherings to no more than 50 people, including celebrant(s), or the maximum number for your space while allowing 2 metres of separation between households, whichever is fewer. If your building cannot accommodate your average Sunday attendance, consider multiple service times that might spread out the number of people gathered at any one moment or meeting in another (perhaps larger) space such as your parish hall.

---

<sup>3</sup> For example, confirming that they do not currently have, and have not in the previous two weeks had, any symptoms of Covid-19; that they have not knowingly had any exposure to anyone with Covid-19 symptoms in the previous two weeks, and that they have not travelled outside of British Columbia in the previous two weeks. If they are a member of an at-risk or particularly vulnerable population, their participation should be discouraged.

- To avoid crowding and bottle necks, there is no receiving line following a service. The congregation should simply disperse – again, maintaining physical distance from others while taking care to avoid entrances and exits becoming “log-jam” points.
- There is no nursery or in-person Sunday school or coffee hour following a service. Encourage people to leave the building rather than mingling in-person.
- All common surfaces must be cleaned before and after worship, including doorknobs, counter tops, pews, bathrooms, and electronics.
- No water in the Font or in Holy Water stoop.

## Requirements for Other Services

- Baptisms, weddings, and funerals may resume and must be limited to fewer than 50 people in attendance (including those officiating or serving), while following distancing guidelines (no Holy Eucharist at these services).

## Recommendations for Worship

We recommend the following as you plan worship during Phase II:

- We recommend maintaining a visitor log (including phone numbers and email addresses) for all who enter the building in the event that they may have come in contact with someone with the disease and reporting is required. To the extent possible, the log should be managed by a greeter or an office staff-person or volunteer or follow some other no-touch method.
- We recommend closing bathrooms except for emergency use. After each use, we recommend that the bathroom be re-sanitized.
- We recommend maintaining some online worship and formation opportunities for those that will still be unable to join an in-person gathering, either due to risk or sense of safety.
- We recommend considering inviting people to sign up to attend services in advance, capping sign-up places at a number lower than the maximum attendance, in order to allow space for visitors who may drop in.
- We recommend creating clear markers and spacing for seating to maintain physical distancing.
- We recommend that all attendees wear non-medical masks.
- We recommend (to the extent practicable) holding services outside.
- We recommend increasing ventilation in the worship space (doors and windows open where possible).
- We recommend removing prayer books, hymn books, and Bibles from pew racks during this time. Worship services may be followed using single-use bulletins (that are picked up rather than handed out), by sending a digital copy for people to access on their personal devices, or by the use of screen and projection. We recommend making every

provision for recycling single-use bulletins and limiting the number of bulletins printed for one household.

- We recommend developing a plan for dismissing the congregation in an orderly way to ensure physical distancing as people exit.
- We recommend empowering the greeters to remind participants about these guidelines and Provincial health requirements.
- We recommend developing a plan to reduce the number of doors that people must touch to enter your service, including the use of door stops or greeters.

## Phase II Formation, Fellowship, Fund-Raising Activities and Pastoral Care

During this phase all formation, fellowship and fund-raising activities must remain online or be done by telephone. Pastoral care must not be face-to-face.

- Bible Studies and other small group formation for adults and children must remain online.
- Fellowship (coffee hours, socials, lunches, dinners, interest group gatherings) must remain online
- Fund-raising Activities: Operating fund appeals, and any special fund appeals must remain online or be conducted by telephone.
- Pastoral Care must be conducted by letters, cards, telephone, or videoconference such as Zoom.
- In-person pastoral visiting in care homes is not permitted.

## Phase II Office Building Use Requirements and Recommendations

In Phase II, staff members must be permitted to work from home, if they wish. While some staff may wish to work from Parish premises, especially the immunocompromised, parents of children, and those older than 60 should be discouraged from doing so. We advise that the mode of transportation a parish employee or volunteer uses to travel to work be taken into consideration in terms of their working in the office or from home.

In-office functions must still be minimal, focusing effort and activity only on essential operations. All meetings must be held online or by telephone.

Any staff members or volunteers working from church-owned buildings must continue to follow social distancing and sanitary guidelines, including:

- Maintaining two metres of separation between individuals
- Regular hand-washing and sanitizer use
- Regular disinfection of common surfaces including doorknobs, countertops, bathrooms (if used at all) and office electronics.

Parish Council or other teams/ministry committees must continue to be held online.

## Phase II Building Use by User Groups and Rentals

- During this time the use of church buildings by all user groups including 12-step groups is suspended.
- Rental tenants continue to be invited to suspend their operations. They are required to sign a waiver should they decide to continue operating.
- Licensed Child-care providers have been recognized by Provincial Health Authorities as providing an essential service. Guidance from Provincial Health Authorities has contemplated that such providers may, or may not, choose to stay open. To the extent child-care providers using church property elect to continue operating, the Diocesan Office recommends asking providers to sign a form confirming that they have satisfied themselves that their activities are not prohibited; that they are making their own informed decision to continue operating, and that they will not seek to hold the Diocese or the Parish liable for any loss or damage arising as a result of Covid-19. Please contact the Synod Office for further information.

## Other Recommendations

We recommend parishes to continue displaying signs outlining COVID-19 symptoms and urging people to stay home/seek medical attention if they experience symptoms or feel unsafe.

We recommend parishes continue to maintain appropriate stocks of tissue, soap, hand sanitizer, and disposable paper towels for drying hands.

We recommend maintaining a visitor log (See under recommendations for worship for details).

## Phase II Service and Outreach

- Food programs continue to follow the process and guidelines already developed and must receive the approval of the Archbishop's Office.
- Outside organizations using church kitchens for food programs must continue to read and sign a letter of indemnification.
- Other in-person service and outreach programs continue to be suspended during this time unless approved by the Archbishop's Office.

# Phase III: Greater In-Person Participation

## Overview

During Phase III, parishes are allowed to celebrate Holy Eucharist, with only the celebrant receiving the Sacrament in both kinds. Everyone else present will be invited to receive the bread only, via individual wafers. Worship services are limited to the same number of attendees as in Phase II, above. Additionally, a greater range of in-person activities is allowed. In all activities, with the exception of the distribution of communion which must be done using strict protocols, parishes must continue physical distancing as well as all the other precautions to inhibit the spread of infection.

Vulnerable parishioners may still prefer to participate online only.

As with Phase II, in order to move to Phase III the Priest-in-Charge, Church Wardens, and (for incorporated Parishes) Trustees are required to have answered or to have revisited the questions listed in Appendix A. Once these conversations have taken place, they must have completed the questionnaire/application in Appendix B and return it to Bill Siksay at the Synod Office to receive any comments and to have been given permission to implement the Parish's plan. **Note that the questionnaire need only be submitted once, for Phases II and III.**

## Preparing the Church for Wider Use of the Building

Prior to expanding the wider use of church buildings by more people and groups, the parish must provide for the sanitization of the church building with special attention to areas of the building that will now be open to in-person gatherings. Pay special attention to high touch areas including pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, stair railings, and microphones. Please see the current cleaning guidelines from BCCDC.

## Phase III - Worship Requirements and Recommendations

In Phase III parishes may offer in-person worship while adhering to the following requirements and recommendations.

### Phase III Requirements for In-person Worship:

- During Phase III parishes may offer Holy Eucharist (subject to the requirements below) or some form of the Daily Office or worship focusing on readings, preaching, prayers and music.
- There is no physical touching during any portion of in-person worship. This includes physically sharing the Peace (although, as above, exchanging the Greeting of Peace, without physical contact, is encouraged).

- Any processions in the liturgy must provide for social distancing among clergy and among participants in the procession and congregants.
- There is no passing of an offering plate through the pews. To limit contact parishioners may offer financial gifts online or to a stationary plate as they come in or during worship.
- Households must sit at least two metres apart from other households or individuals, 360°, if gathered for in-person worship.
- Parishioners, celebrants and deacons must refrain from singing when gathered for in-person worship during this phase. Singing is among the riskier behaviors when it comes to spreading the virus. Music using wind or brass instruments is prohibited during this phase. If a congregation wishes to have a cantor or soloist (singer), in addition to instrumental music, that person must be appropriately screened in terms of their health<sup>4</sup> and must be situated further from each other and from other worship participants than even the normal two-metre physical distancing guidelines. To decrease risk, a singer should be turned away from others in the space.
- Choir practice is not permitted during Phase III.

### Requirements for Gathering Size and Contact in Worship

- During this phase any in-person worship gatherings must be limited to no more than 50 people, or the maximum number for your space while allowing 2 meters of total separation between households, whichever is fewer. If your building cannot accommodate your average Sunday attendance, consider multiple service times that might spread out the number of people gathered at any one moment or consider worshipping in the (perhaps larger) parish hall.
- To avoid crowding and bottle necks, there is no receiving line following a service. Continue encouraging people to leave the building rather than mingling in-person.
- There is no nursery or in-person Sunday school during Phase III.
- All common surfaces must be cleaned before and after worship, including doorknobs, counter tops, pews, bathrooms (if used at all) and electronics.

### Requirements for the Celebration of the Holy Eucharist

- All sanitization of spaces, vessels and peoples' hands must occur before and after the Eucharist.
- Immediately prior to the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer and immediately prior to the distribution of communion the celebrant is required to wash and/or sanitize their hands.

---

<sup>4</sup> For example, confirming that they do not currently have, and have not in the previous two weeks had, any symptoms of Covid-19; that they have not knowingly had any exposure to anyone with Covid-19 symptoms in the previous two weeks, and that they have not travelled outside of British Columbia in the previous two weeks. If they are a member of an at-risk or particularly vulnerable population, their participation should be discouraged.



- The celebrant should consecrate a priest's host for the celebrant to consume and consecrate individual wafers for those receiving communion. The wafers (regular and gluten-free) for the people are to be covered and placed to the side of the altar during the consecration.
- After the breaking of the bread, the celebrant should consume the priest's host and the consecrated wine.
- The celebrant then must put on a mask, sanitize their hands again and distribute the bread to those receiving; making sure not to touch the hands of those receiving the bread.
- Communion must be in one kind only. The celebrant must be the only communion ministrant.
- After all have received bread, the celebrant must discard their mask in an appropriate receptacle and sanitize their hands again.

## Requirements for Other Services

Baptisms, weddings, and funerals may continue and must be limited to fewer than 50 people in attendance, while following physical distancing and sanitization guidelines.

## Recommendations for Worship

We recommend the following as you plan worship during Phase III

- We recommend maintaining a visitor log (including phone numbers and email addresses) for all who enter the building in the event that they may have come in contact with someone with the disease and reporting is required. To the extent possible, the log should be managed by a greeter or an office staff-person or volunteer or follow some other no-touch method.
- We recommend closing bathrooms except for emergency use. After each use, we recommend the bathroom must be re-sanitized.
- We recommend maintaining some online worship and formation opportunities for those that will still be unable to join an in-person gathering, either due to risk or sense of safety.
- We recommend avoiding crowding in the sanctuary and building to the extent possible. Consider offering multiple services to help people spread out.
- We recommend inviting people to sign-up for services in advance while allowing space for visitors who may drop in.
- We recommend continuing to offer clear markers and spacing for seating to maintain social distancing.
- We recommend that parishioners continue to be encouraged to wear non-medical masks.
- We recommend continuing to consider holding services outside, to the extent practicable.

- We recommend continuing to increase ventilation (doors and windows open where possible)
- We recommend continuing to consider removing prayer books, hymn books and bibles from pew racks during this time. Worship services may be followed using single-use bulletins (that are picked up rather than handed out), by sending a digital copy for people to access on their personal devices, or by the use of screen and projection. Please make every provision for recycling single-use bulletins and limiting the number of bulletins printed for one household.
- We recommend having a plan for dismissing the congregation in an orderly way to ensure social distancing as people exit.
- We recommend empowering greeters to remind participants about these guidelines and Provincial health requirements.
- We recommend having a plan to reduce the number of doors that people must touch to enter your service, including the use of door stops or greeters.

## Phase III Formation, Fellowship, Fund-Raising and Pastoral Care

During this phase formation, fellowship, fund-raising efforts and some pastoral care may be done via in-person small group meetings or one-on-one meetings.

- Bible Studies and other group formation may be conducted in-person in groups of 50 or under that observe physical distancing. At this time, we require these meetings to be held in church buildings and not in peoples' homes.
- Programming for children and youth is permissible as long as physical distancing and sanitizing protocols are followed. Nurseries are not permissible during this Phase.
- Fellowship (coffee hours, socials, lunches, dinners, interest group gatherings) may be conducted in groups of 50 and under. Parishes must make every provision to ensure adequate space to avoid crowding. A gloved person must distribute any food or drink. Buffets and self-serve food or drink are not permitted.
- Fund-raising efforts in groups of 50 or under may continue as long as sanitization and social distancing protocols are followed.
- Some pastoral care may be done in one-on-one meetings in the church building as long as social distancing is adhered to. Home visits are not permitted at this time without the permission of the Archbishop.

## Phase III Office Building Use Requirements and Recommendations

In Phase III in-person meetings are permitted. We advise considering how you might enable your high-risk members to join your meetings digitally.

Regular office operations are permitted. We advise considering how you might maintain flexibility for staff members that are immunocompromised, have children unable to attend school or access childcare, or are over 60.

Communal spaces must continue to be cleaned on a regular basis, including before and after gatherings.

Any staff members or volunteers working from church-owned buildings must continue to follow physical distancing and sanitary guidelines, including:

- Maintaining two metres of separation between individuals
- Regular hand-washing and sanitizer use
- Regular disinfection of common surfaces including doorknobs, countertops, and office electronics.

## Phase III Building Use by User Groups and Rentals

- During this time the use of church buildings by all user groups, including 12-step groups and all rentals is permissible if the numbers of people at one time are 50 or under. We recommend that parishes only open to those groups that they can safely accommodate at this phase given physical distancing, hand-washing and sanitization protocols. All user groups will be asked to sign a declaration of compliance with safe procedures.
- Licensed Child-care providers are permitted to resume or continue their operations.

## Phase III Other Recommendations

We recommend that parishes continue displaying signs outlining COVID-19 symptoms and urging people to stay home/seek medical attention if they experience symptoms or feel unsafe..

We recommend parishes continue to maintain appropriate stocks of tissue, soap, hand sanitizer, and disposable paper towels for drying hands.

We recommend continuing to maintain a visitor log (See under recommendations for Worship for details)

## Phase III Service and Outreach

- [Food programs continue to follow the process and guidelines already developed and must receive the approval of the Archbishop's Office.](#)
- [Outside organizations using church kitchens for food programs must continue to read and sign a letter of indemnification.](#)
- Other in-person service and outreach programs must follow all physical distancing and sanitization protocols and must gain approval from the Archbishop's Office.

## Other: Summer Programming

We advise against offering in-person summer programming, including Vacation Bible Schools. .

While the risk to children from Covid-19 appears to be somewhat lower than to the population as a whole, there is an ongoing risk that they may carry the virus back home and transmit it to other family members. We advise considering providing online or no-touch drop off at-home activities.

# Phase IV: Full Participation with New Learning

## Overview

In Phase IV all in-person activities are allowed. During Phase IV parishes are encouraged to put into practice the learning that they gained from the earlier phases. That learning might include, for example:

- The value of offering online worship in the form of the Daily Office to all parishioners;
- The value of live-streaming Sunday worship to increase participation among those who are unable to attend in person;
- The importance of continuing to support key health habits (no intinction, hand-washing for servers and those receiving communion, sanitization procedures for kitchens and high-touch surfaces etc.);
- The possibility of using ZOOM (or similar) for some meetings and formational events;
- The value of increasing pastoral care through phone calls;
- The value of offering materials for home worship and encouraging home worship.

## Phase IV - Worship Requirements and Recommendations

- Holy Eucharist with the common cup is permissible. Intinction is not permissible.
- Those who continue to be concerned about their health are encouraged to receive only the bread.
- We recommend implementing many of the protocols learned during the pandemic: that is, the careful washing and sanitization of space, objects, the hands of communion ministrants and, where appropriate, the hands of those receiving communion.
- Gatherings of over 50 people are allowed. We recommend where possible to avoid overcrowding.
- Congregational singing in worship is permissible. Celebrants, officiants and deacons singing the liturgy is permissible.
- We recommend parishes try, to the extent possible in their individual contexts, exploring ways to livestream Sunday worship so that services continue to be available to those who cannot be at the parish in person.
- We recommend that you begin or continue offering some form of the Divine Office (Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer, Night Prayer, Compline) online. This may be in addition to some in-person form of the Divine Office.
- We recommend considering the creation of materials for prayer in the home.
- Physical contact during worship is permissible. We recommend stating that people have the option of continuing not to make physical contact with others.

## Phase IV Formation, Fellowship, Fund-Raising and Pastoral Care

- All in-person formation, fellowship, and fund-raising events of any size are permissible.
- We recommend exploring ways to offer on-line programs of formation, fellowship and fund-raising that allow those who cannot gather in person to participate. Continuing to offer online programming may also broaden who the programming can reach.
- All children's programs (Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, nurseries) of any size are permissible.
- All forms of pastoral care may continue. We recommend that those doing home visits or visits in care homes wash and sanitize any vessels and their hands both before and after their visits.

## Phase IV Office Building Use Requirements and Recommendations

In Phase IV in-person meetings of any size are permitted. We advise to consider how you might enable members to join your meetings digitally.

Regular office operations are permitted. We advise considering how you might maintain flexibility for staff members as appropriate and workable.

Communal spaces must continue to be cleaned on a regular basis.

## Phase IV Building Use by User Groups and Rentals

- During this time the use of church buildings by all user groups, including 12-step groups and all rentals (including child-care providers) is permissible. Any size of gathering is permissible.

## Phase IV Other Recommendations

We recommend parishes continue to maintain appropriate stocks of tissue, soap, hand sanitizer, and disposable paper towels for drying hands.

## Phase IV Service and Outreach

All compassionate service to include food programs are permissible and must follow the relevant health guidelines.

- Outside organizations using church kitchens is permissible. They, too, must follow relevant health guidelines.



# Appendix A

## Questions for the Priest-in-Charge, Church Wardens, and Trustees

We offer this list of questions for each Parish's Responsible Persons to discuss in consultation with other Parish clergy, parish staff and, where appropriate other parish leaders. When the Diocese signals that parishes may seek approval to move to Phases II or III, we recommend you work through these questions before submitting your questionnaire seeking approval to re-open for in-person gathering.

- How will you maintain connection with those who cannot gather in-person, even when restrictions are lifted?
- How many people can your worship space hold if you are worshipping with household groups sitting six feet apart? How will you adjust seating/mark the space to assist those attending to maintain social distancing? Would worshipping in your parish hall provide more space?
- How will you discourage congregating after worship services?
- How will you continue to be invitational and open to people that are not yet part of your community?
- How will you ensure sanitation and disinfection for all your communal spaces? How will you potentially notify people about the emergency-only use of bathrooms? When needed, how will you sanitize bathrooms after every use?
- How might your building use agreements need to be updated to reflect the new realities revealed by the pandemic?
- How will you maintain necessary stewardship and fund-raising activities to maintain operations while the congregation, or part of it, is dispersed?
- What assets do you have (space, yard, volunteers) that might be used to respond in service to your community in light of the pandemic?
- If someone contracts COVID-19, how will you communicate with your congregation and members who may have come into contact with that individual, while remembering privacy and pastoral care?
- If someone who has been in your building contracts COVID-19, how will you conduct an intensive cleaning prior to its next use?
- How will you communicate your safety plan and best practices to the congregation?
- How will you continue to offer online ministry?

### **Other Questions to Consider**

While guidance as to specific practices is given below, it is also important for each congregation, in their own context, to engage with and consider practical questions, as follows:

- Given what you have learned during the time period of streaming worship, including non-Eucharistic worship (forms of the Divine Office and other ways of praying), how will your worship be different? Will you continue to stream worship or offer online options?



- How will you encourage smaller group (less than 50 people) activities (such as online Bible studies, Sunday School, etc.) as a ramp-up strategy ahead of Sunday gatherings?
- What practices of leading worship in this interim need to be passed on to lay people, so that lay and clergy leadership can guide the parish through this phase?
- How will you cap attendance at below 50 (say, at 40 or so – or fewer, if required in your space, in order to preserve physical distancing requirements) so that there is room for members of the community to join you?
- How will you limit the number of people serving in worship (such as lectors, acolytes, multiple clergy, etc.), so that more people may be able to attend in the congregation?
- How might parishioners invite others to join them in returning to worship?
- How will you discourage the receiving line after church and/or congregating after worship services and at other times?
- How will greeters/ushers help to monitor adherence to attendance and other guidelines? How will they also model masking and physical distance?
- If offering outdoor worship opportunities, how will you ensure safety which is equal to or greater than indoor worship?
- Do you have the masks and cleaning supplies needed to clean the common spaces?
- How will you ensure cleanliness and sanitation in regard to the following items and spaces? Worship leaflets/bulletins, any books, the spaces where smaller groups gather during the week or on a Sunday, church office activities, playgrounds, bathrooms. Physical items such as the altar, pulpit, lectern (including microphones), kneelers, communion rail.
- How will you ensure the sanitization and safety practices for the following people and activities? (Altar Guild, Sunday School workers, Greeters/Ushers, Acolytes, musicians, money counters, seniors and at-risk people)
- Will you celebrate with a special first day back to worship liturgy? If so, how will you try to make sure that as many people as possible can feel part of this special occasion (even where physical distancing requirements mean that not everyone can attend the same liturgy in person?)

#### Approval process

- Questionnaire/Application (Appendix B) is submitted to Bill Siksay at the Synod Office ([bsiksay@vancouver.anglican.ca](mailto:bsiksay@vancouver.anglican.ca)) for review and approval. Application must be received 10 days prior to date the parish would like to re-open.
- Parishes whose proposals do not initially meet the requirements for re-opening will receive recommendations with an invitation to resubmit

## Appendix B

# Questionnaire and Application for Re-opening a Parish Church to In-Person Gatherings

*This questionnaire/application is intended to guide your Parish through all of the steps and decisions you will need to make to move ahead safely with your proposed return to in-person gathering. It will also be used as a guide to allow the Archbishop's Office to consider your request for authorization, including any suggestions that staff may have to assist you in moving ahead. **The application includes questions related to both Phases II and III and need only be submitted once.** The Archbishop's Office will notify all Parishes when it is permissible to move to the next phase. **Please submit your application 10 days in advance of the date you would like to re-open.***

### Background

1. Have you reviewed the following documents, and considered how this guidance may impact your plan to re-open to in-person worship and other gatherings?
  - a. "The Re-Opening of Churches in the Diocese of New Westminster" (the full document to which this questionnaire is attached) (the "**Re-Opening Plan**")  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
  - b. BC Centre for Disease Control's COVID-19 guidance for Faith Organizations ([link here](#))  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

### Parish Authorization and Approval

2. Have the "Responsible Persons" of your Parish (as defined in the Canons of the Diocese) reviewed and approved your proposal to initiate this plan. (For incorporated parishes: Priest-in-Charge, Church Wardens, and Trustees; for non-incorporated Parishes, Priest-in-Charge and Church Wardens. In addition, it may be appropriate to consult with your parish's Parish Council.)  
  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Please list the names of the "Responsible Persons" who have reviewed and approved your plan.

### **Date for Re-opening**

3. On which date are you applying to re-open?

### **Preparing the Church Building for Re-entry**

4. What (specifics) will you do to prepare the church building for re-entry at Phase II and wider use at Phase III? Who will do this work?

### **Sunday Worship**

5. What is your Sunday worship plan for Phases II and III? What form(s) of worship and how many Sunday worship services do you intend to offer (in-person or online) for Phases II and III?
6. How many people can your worship space or the space(s) where you intend to hold worship accommodate while complying with the requirements set out in the Re-Opening Plan, in households sitting two metres apart in all directions? (Must be no more than 50, including clergy or laity serving).
7. Will it be necessary to modify where you worship, the position of furniture in the worship space or the way the space is marked to assist those attending in maintaining social distancing? If so, how?
8. How will you undertake training with your Greeters and what will you train them to do?
9. What is your music plan for worship during Phases II and III?
10. How will you ensure cleanliness and sanitization in regard to the following items and spaces?
  - a. Worship leaflets/bulletins
  - b. Prayer Books, Hymn Books (if used)
  - c. Physical items such as pews, the altar, pulpit, lectern, kneelers, communion rail.
  - d. Bathrooms
  - e. Other common spaces or high-touch areas
11. How and who will you sanitize worship and other spaces between any worship services?

## **Other Forms of Worship or Prayer**

12. What other forms of worship or prayer do you intend to offer in Phase II and III (weekday in-person worship or online worship)? How will you provide for physical distancing in any in-person weekday worship?

## **Office Building Use**

13. What is your plan for those working in the Church Office during Phases II and III?
14. What is your plan for meetings of Parish Council and other parish working groups during Phases II and III?

## **Fund-raising**

15. What are you doing or will you be doing in Phases II and III to support financial giving to your operating fund or towards special needs?

## **Phase III ONLY**

### **Phase III - Introducing in-person Holy Eucharist**

16. What is your plan for introducing and managing Holy Eucharist (should you choose to do so in Phase III), paying particular attention to sanitization and physical distancing?

### **Phase III - User Groups and Rentals**

17. What is your plan in Phase III for re-opening the building to any user groups?
18. What is your plan in Phase III for re-opening the building to rentals?

### **Phase III - Formation, Fellowship and Pastoral Care**

19. What is your plan for any in-person formation activities/offerings for adults?
20. What is your plan for any in-person formation activities/offerings for children or youth?
21. What is your plan for hosting in-person fellowship?

22. How will you be handling any in-person pastoral care in Phase III?

**Service and Outreach**

23. What is your plan to support existing or re-open outreach programs in Phases II and III? Have you completed and submitted the appropriate material for approval to the Synod Office?

24. For food ministry programs, have you completed and submitted the appropriate forms for approval to the Synod Office? (Please see here)

**Other**

25. If someone who has attended in-person worship at your Parish contracts COVID-19, how will you communicate with your congregation and members who may have come into contact with that individual, while remembering privacy and pastoral care?

26. What practical support do you need from your Regional Archdeacon or from the Synod Office to help with the implementation of these plans?

Signature of "Responsible Persons

_____	_____	_____
Print	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Print	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Print	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Print	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Print	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Print	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Print	Signature	Date

