

November 19, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Today, November 19, the provincial health officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry issued a new health order suspending in-person public worship, social and community gatherings—whether indoors or outdoors—for at least the next two weeks (until December 7) as part of [widespread measures being implemented across the province](#). This order will be reviewed by provincial health officials and updates will be reported as they are made. Parishes should prepare for these restrictions to be extended and to plan alternate arrangements for Christmas accordingly.

This order goes into effect today. Weddings and funerals (excluding receptions) will be permitted during this period with a maximum attendance of ten people, including the celebrant, providing they adhere to the parish's approved safety plan. It is our understanding that it is permissible to pre-record or live-stream worship for remote participation. In terms of parish life, it is advisable that we conduct all gatherings, social activities and meetings remotely for this period.

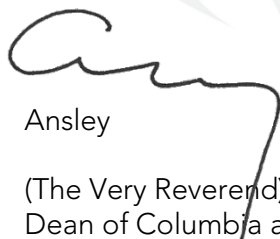
Church facilities can still be used by staff with adherence to safety protocols, though staff who can work from home are encouraged to do so. Masks must be worn, by those who can, in all common areas of our facilities.

Community user groups should be advised to consult the [provincial health order](#) for further information as to how these restrictions apply to them. Parishes may decline to host groups for safety reasons at their discretion.

Dr. Henry has been very clear in her conversations with faith leaders about the invaluable service we provide to our parishioners and the wider community, providing hope in what has been a very difficult time. While she knows her decision to issue this order may be met with disappointment, she is calling us to draw from the deep wells of our compassion and mercy to care for those who are close to us. As Dr. Henry is fond of saying, "This isn't forever, it is just for now."

Obviously, such an order is disappointing to our parishioners and clergy. This is particularly so as we begin to think about Advent and Christmas. But, we know the critical situation facing our province and the rest of Canada, and the important role we play in helping to flatten the curve of COVID-19 in our province.

Blessings,



Ansley

(The Very Reverend) M. Ansley Tucker
Dean of Columbia and diocesan administrator