



**Diocese of Kootenay**  
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

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**Kootenay Diocesan policy for in-person worship, other gatherings and rentals.**

This policy has been updated to reflect the latest Public Health Orders (PHO) dated October 25, 2021 and October 29, 2021 and the Interior Health Order (MHO) dated Sep 13, 2021. The links to these orders and other helpful documents are listed below.

- **October 25th Public Health Order**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-order-gatherings-events.pdf>

- **September 13th Interior Health Order**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-mho-gatherings-events-central-okanagan.pdf>

- **Face Coverings Order**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-order-face-coverings.pdf>

- **WorkSafe BC's Communicable Disease Prevention Plan Template**

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/books-guides/communicable-disease-prevention-guide-employers?lang=en>

- **Printable COVID-19 Signage and Posters**

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/signage-posters>

### **Distinction between Worship and Non-Worship Gatherings**

The Public Health Order exempts worship gatherings from its scope but is unclear as to what constitutes worship. Earlier versions referred to life cycle events as being subject to the PHO but now receptions for weddings and funerals are specifically considered organized gatherings. For clarity between worship and non-worship gatherings assume that if the primary purpose of the gathering is prayer and praise, then it's worship. If prayer and praise are incidental to the gathering, then it's non-worship and falls under the Organized Gatherings part of the PHO. Funeral and wedding services in the church are worship but the receptions are not. Educational and informational events such as Bible studies are non-worship. Because receptions are organized events, social and coffee hours following a service are discouraged.

### **Children and Youth Programs**

Sunday School, while having worship components, is primarily an educational event. The PHO of October 25 requires all adults (age 19 and up) to be double vaccinated when participating in such events.

### **Return to In-Person Worship**

The decision to return to in-person worship should be supported by both the incumbent and the Church committee. No congregation is required to return to in-person worship but any who do must follow the guidelines below. Further, congregations do not require individual permission from the Archbishop in order to proceed with in-person worship, provided this policy is observed. We expect that all parishes will maintain a Covid safety plan (see below) for every service. This plan need not vary from Sunday to Sunday but will need to be adjusted in the event of a wedding, funeral, or other special service.

There are no restrictions or guidance on the number of people who can be involved in leading worship, so long as they follow masking and spacing requirements. There are no restrictions on the length of service. 50 people, or 50% of the building capacity if greater, remains the maximum number of people who can attend an indoor service. Physical distancing is strongly recommended at any indoor service.

The Diocese does not require proof of vaccination for entry into worship services. The requirement for proof of vaccination for wedding and funeral receptions from the Provincial Health Officer must be observed. Parishes may, at their discretion, require proof of vaccination for worship if the Incumbent and Parish Council deem it necessary. If a parish chooses to require proof of vaccination, non-vaccinated persons must be encouraged to attend online services. Where parishes do not require vaccination, people serving in roles with frequent contact with others such as greeters, sidepersons, and communion assistants must withdraw temporarily from that ministry if they are not fully vaccinated.

Outdoor worship (please see separate outdoor guidelines) where possible and weather permitting continues to carry the least risk. Indoor worship is allowed by the PHO and may be

the only option. If possible, online services should continue to provide for those who are unable or uncomfortable with in person worship.

This document is in five parts. First is guidance for outdoor worship, second is guidance for indoor worship, third is guidance for Eucharist and guidance for indoor gatherings for non-worship events. Food service and food based events are discouraged at this time. In the event that food service is required, you'll find a list of guidelines for food service at congregational gatherings. Please read all of this document carefully and contact your Regional Dean or the Diocesan Office if you have any questions.

### Outdoor worship

Capacity	No limits
Physical distancing	No limits
Masks	No
Pre-registration	No
Contact tracing (sign in)	Recommended for services with significant numbers of visitors (eg. funerals, weddings, Christmas)
Health check before entry	Signage for non-attendance if ill
Time limit	None
Singing	Up to four singers unmasked and 3m from Congregation Congregation may sing if masked
Communion	Follow attached guidelines
Social / coffee time	Not recommended. See food guidelines.
Collection	No
Bulletin / Books	No re-use of objects. Congregants collect bulletin from pile and take away
Sanitiser	Sanitiser Available Sanitise high touch surfaces before and after service
Leaders	May remove mask whilst speaking, singing etc Must be 3m from congregation

## Indoor worship

Capacity	50 people or 50% of capacity
Physical distancing	No limits but two metres recommended
Masks	Required for congregational singing and liturgy
Pre-registration	No
Contact tracing (sign in)	Recommended for services with significant numbers of visitors (eg. funerals, weddings, Christmas)
Health check before entry	Signage for non-attendance if ill
Time limit	None
Singing	Up to four singers unmasked and 3m from Congregation Congregation may sing if masked
Communion	Follow attached guidelines
Social / coffee time	Not recommended. See food guidelines
Collection	Put out plate – no passing of objects
Bulletin / Books	No re-use of objects within a 48 hour window. Congregants collect bulletin from pile and take away
Ventilation	All doors and windows open or A/C with HEPA filter
Sanitising	Sanitiser Available Sanitise high touch surfaces before and after service
Leaders	May remove mask whilst speaking, singing etc Must be 3m from congregation
Between services (Same day)	Allow 1 hour for sanitising and air change No interaction between congregations

### Policy for Eucharist

This cannot be a “one size fits all” policy, so response will need to be determined by a decision of parish council and incumbent together. Your response will depend on many factors: the risk in your particular community (e.g. vulnerable population, case numbers in your area), your capacity to keep the safety protocols, the capacity to have good ventilation in winter, the desire of the community to have Eucharist in this format, the ability to maintain worship on-line or distribute reserved sacrament for people who cannot attend, etc.

The decision to proceed with Eucharist needs to be made by the Priest and Parish Council. If in the judgment of the priest in a parish however, it is not advisable or feasible to proceed with having an in-person Eucharist, then the parish will not proceed.

There is no rush to have communion; this policy is permissive but not prescriptive. It is fine to choose not to meet for in-person worship and not to have Eucharist if your community or the priest deems it not wise at this time.

**Any offering of Eucharist will be for the congregation to receive bread only in the form of individual wafers served in a sanitary manner. The priest will also consecrate a small amount of wine but will either consume it themselves, or it will be consumed by one designated parishioner. There will be no sharing of the cup. The prayer of consecration needs to be done in a way that preserves the sanitary nature of the host. The words of administration need to be spoken while distanced from the recipient. The celebrant must be masked during distribution.**

Proper distancing and hand sanitization, with masks, must be maintained at all times.

### **Indoor Gatherings - Non-Worship**

In accordance with the MHO (see link above), participants in non-worship in-person events must be fully vaccinated. Such events include Bible studies, Parish Council meetings, various committee meetings, and other gatherings of congregational members. In addition, participants must remain seated during such meetings. For more details, please see the MHO Section E. Masks are generally required except when eating. Please review the PHO on face coverings dated Oct 29, 2021 (see link above)

### **Food Service Guidelines for Congregational Indoor Gatherings**

Participants must be fully vaccinated and remain seated except to pick up food. Masks are to be worn except when eating.

- Eliminate self-serve style systems, and replace them with attended stations or individually wrapped food.
- Ensure adequate hand washing or sanitizing stations are located close to food.
- Ensure appropriate physical distancing is maintained in food service and eating areas. Consider the configuration of tables and seating to ensure distancing is maintained.
- Establish cleaning procedures for condiments and other items brought to the table or available for sharing. Ensure they are cleaned between uses.
- Physical contact between the designated serving individuals and congregants should not occur while serving food or drink (e.g., placing food in a congregant's mouth). Instead, the server can place the individual food or drink portion in a congregant's outstretched hand, or on a table for the congregant to pick up.
- The designated serving individuals should wash or sanitize hands immediately before serving.

### **Addendum to Diocesan Rental Policy 5.2.7**

In consideration of the ongoing pandemic the following is an addendum to the existing diocesan rental policy (5.2.7)(<https://www.kootenayanglican.ca/s/527ChurchRental.pdf>) and is effective as of July 15th, 2021 and until further notice.

Please note that this addendum and our diocesan rental policy is permissive not prescriptive. Parishes may feel the need to add requirements in their context. Any additional requirements added by a parish must be enforced by the parish because we are liable for unenforced regulations.

To help prevent the spread of communicable diseases, the Diocese of Kootenay and its parishes will ensure that facilities are regularly cleaned and properly maintained. Should a given parish council feel that extra cleaning is required as a result of the activities of rental groups, the extra costs may be applied to rental groups.

Rental groups are at all times responsible for the activity and behaviour of group members or attendees at the events or meetings hosted by the rental group.

Further, rental groups are obligated to ensure that the requirements outlined in the October 25, 2021 PHO (sections A, C and D), the October 29, 2021PHO, and the September 13, 2021 MHO are met. They are attached at the beginning of this document.

Rentals to groups for the purpose of worship are exempt from the PHO but they are subject to the Diocesan policy on in-person worship.

Rentals to groups involving children and youth must adhere to sections 7 and 8 of Part D of the PHO.