

## Diocesan Reopening Plan FAQ

### 1. May parishes choose not to re-open?

Yes. A parish must discern if it's ready and able to re-open prior to Phase IV. A parish could discern that for reasons (such as the number of vulnerable persons in the parish, the vulnerable state of the clergy leader, the lack of human resources and personnel) that it does not choose to open prior to Phase IV. If this is the case, the Archbishop's Office would like to know that this is what you are going to do.

### 2. Will plans for children's summer activities be reviewed?

At this time, we do not recommend that any children's summer activities occur. In the Provincial Health Officer's phone call with faith leaders the week of May 24 she stated that overnight children's activities this summer were unsafe. She did mention that they are working on guidelines for day camps. Once these guidelines are released we would recommend that they be used should a parish decide to offer children's summer activities.

### 3. Will churches that rent buildings be allowed to re-open as well? Even if a parish opts not to re-open?

The policy of the Diocese, to date, has been to invite (though not require) rental groups to consider suspending their operations. Our concern has been that to purport to "require" renters not to operate, where it is otherwise permissible to do so (under prevailing law and regulations), may be a breach of contract and could potentially expose the Diocese or parishes to liability.

During Phases I and II, that will remain Diocese policy. However, as the Province begins to re-open, it is acknowledged that many tenants will be able, lawfully, to operate; many wish to do so, and their operations can be valuable to parish communities in many ways.

To the extent existing rental groups (including other churches) choose to re-open, or to continue operating, under the terms of their lease, they are required to sign a waiver (a copy of which can be provided by the Synod Office), confirming that this is their own decision and at their own risk.

For church tenants in particular, it may be helpful to (a) notify them of your parish's own plans, around re-opening; and (b) provide them, for information, with the Diocese's Re-Opening Plan – not as a prescriptive requirement that they follow it, but to inform them about the level of scrutiny and analysis which we are expecting of our own parish communities, as this may provoke useful discussions within the tenant's organization around appropriate protocols.

The policy of the Diocese remains that it is for the rental groups to determine what risk mitigation measures are appropriate in the context of their own operations, and not for the parish landlord to "approve" or "endorse" these.

**4. What is the rationale for discouraging singing during worship? Are there guidelines provided by the Provincial health officer concerning this?**

Based on the best information to date, singing is a high-risk activity for the spread of COVID-19. The Provincial Health Officer has to date issued no guidelines but has in her phone call with faith leaders the week of May 24, spoken of singing as a high-risk activity. In absence of firm guidance, we prefer to take a conservative approach on congregational singing given the number of vulnerable people in our parishes. We commend to you a recent article in *The Anglican Journal* about the risk of singing.

<https://www.anglicanjournal.com/on-not-singing-the-lords-song/>

**5. Is the playing of an organ permissible in Phases II and III?**

Yes.

**6. Who will be reviewing the applications to re-open and how long is the reviewing process?**

Members of the Review Team (Archbishop Melissa Skelton, the Reverends Philippa Segrave-Pride and Tellison Glover) along with either the Chancellor or Vice Chancellor.

**7. What options are available to have singers during worship?**

Soloists are permissible as long as the soloist is placed far from (at least 5 meters) and turned away from all others. Any use of more than one soloist requires special planning with and permission from the Archbishop's Office.

**8. Is there an expectation in Phase II that the incumbent will provide a worship service for those who want to meet in person - following appropriate guidelines?**

No—this is a matter of discernment among the incumbent and lay leaders as well as receiving permission from the Archbishop's Office.

**9. Is it permissible for parishioners to meet in small groups outside of church and in the open air?**

Yes, in Phase III this is permissible.

**10. What are the requirements for hand washing during in-person gatherings?**

Parishioners should be encouraged to wash their hands at home before attending worship and after they return home. Parishioners should also have access to hand sanitizer to use before and after receiving the Eucharist during Phase III. All servers and clergy must wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds prior to and after serving in worship.

**11. What is the rationale for restrictions concerning the Eucharist during Phases II and III?**

Phase II is a time for parishes simply to become accustomed to safely welcoming people back into their buildings without the added attention needed to celebrate the Eucharist and

distribute communion. Phase III restrictions concern the way that communion is distributed and are included in the materials in order to increase the safety of celebrant and communicant.

**12. What is the plan if there is a second wave?**

The plan would be to go from a later phase to an earlier phase depending on the severity of any possible second wave.

**13. Who decides in the parish if it should apply to re-open? Who makes the decisions?**

This is a joint decision of the "Responsible Persons" in each parish.

**14. How would children participate in in-person worship during Phases II and III?**

During Phases II and III children will need to remain with their families in worship.

**15. Can a parish opt to re-open during Phase III and not in Phase II?**

Yes, but we highly recommend that all parishes start slowly and simply in what they do in order to test their own capacity to manage the complexity of people returning to their buildings in a safe manner.

**16. In Phase II, what are the restrictions for holding a Eucharist?**

In Phase II, the only Eucharistic service that may be offered is a filmed or livestreamed Eucharist that is NOT an in-person service. Guidelines for how to do this are found in the materials for Phase 1.

**17. What should a parish do if the incumbent is a vulnerable person?**

This important fact should figure into any planning and application that the parish submits with the possibility of a lay person or supply priest officiating/celebrating at any publicly offered liturgies or any livestream or recorded liturgy. If you feel that this is going to be a long-term situation please contact your Regional Archdeacon for further advice.

**18. Do priests require diocesan permission to provide pastoral care at a hospital?**

Clergy will need to follow the guidelines and rules of any hospital they choose to visit.

**19. Are there guidelines for ministries such as street outreach, urban aboriginal ministry?**

Not as yet. These are in development. Please reach out to us on this if this applies to your ministry.

**20. What are technical requirements in terms of internet speed that are required in order to "live stream"?**

As each building has different needs, please contact your internet provider.

**21. Are there any guidelines for using the bathrooms?**

We recommend that the bathrooms be closed and used only in emergencies and that parishioners be told this in advance of deciding to attend publicly offered liturgies at your parish. We recommend to anyone having to use your bathroom that they do so one at a time (multiple people not admitted to the same bathroom at the same time). Should someone need to use the bathroom, we recommend that the bathroom have clean paper towels to be used to dry hands after washing them, that the bathroom be cleaned and sanitized by someone wearing gloves and a mask after each use, that the bathroom and all high-touch surfaces be cleaned and sanitized, and that the person who sanitizes the bathroom wash their hands after cleaning and sanitizing the bathroom.

**22. Why is it necessary to do a deep clean of our buildings?**

We require that the building be thoroughly cleaned before the building is opened to the public even in a limited way. This should be completed for the safety and confidence of those returning to the building.

**23. What is the approximate timeframe for Phase II?**

At this point we don't know. We're hoping Phase II will last 2-4 weeks.

**24. Can you give us some more specific and detailed guidance regarding online only celebrations of the Eucharist?**

The guidance is laid out in the Phase 1 description. To summarize, the in-line celebrations of the Eucharist is a full celebration with all the component parts that would be present at a public in-person Eucharist: bread and wine, Celebrant, a Deacon or lay server and a reader/intercessor as well as a time for Gathering, the Liturgy of the Word, Homily, Creed, Prayers, Eucharistic Prayer, Distribution, Prayer after Communion, Dismissal. The entire celebration must observe physical distancing throughout. The consecrated bread and wine are to be consumed by the celebrant with consecrated bread consumed by one other person in attendance (with that person taking the bread from the altar, not from the hands of the celebrant). One practice that some have found helpful is the following: Prior to the distribution, those watching the livestream/film are invited to place their hand over their heart and pray "Come, Lord Jesus" (or some other invitation) in order to participate prayerfully though they cannot receive the consecrated elements.

**25. What is the difference between user groups, lease holders and a group who rents?**

A *user group* is our commonly used term for occasional groups who are not guilds or groups of the parish. *User groups* may, from time to time, use facilities for meetings or programming. They may or may not provide any financial contribution. There is no formal, written contract with these groups. Such groups may have an historic tie to the parish such as Scouts or Brownies or 12-Step groups.

A *tenant* or *lessee* is a business or other entity which has a formal agreement (a lease) with the parish or diocese which has the right of use of a property or a portion of it for which rent is paid. According to our Canons, a lease which is longer in length than one year is required to be approved by Diocesan Council and the Archbishop.

**26. What do we do in any phase if someone wants to initiate a lease and have not leased from us before?**

In Phase I existing rental tenants have been invited to suspend their operations. They are required to sign a waiver should they decide to continue operating. No new rental agreements should be entered into at this time.

In Phase II the Diocese still encourages renter groups to consider suspending their operations, while acknowledging that as the province re-opens, many tenants can lawfully operate under prevailing requirements, many wish to do so, and their operations can be valuable to parish communities in many ways. To the extent tenants elect to continue operating, they are required to sign a waiver. Entering into new rental agreements during this Phase may only be done with the permission of the Archbishop's Office and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.



**Diocese of New Westminster**  
ANGELICAN CHURCH OF CANADA