

Responses to Questions latest PHO Orders

Many of you have reached out to us with questions in response to the latest PHO orders that were announced on Saturday, November 7. The following is guidance we would offer you in the light of the new orders.

1. **In-Person Worship:** As mentioned in the communique on Saturday, the new PHO order does not apply to in-person worship with 50 people or under. The new order does, however, emphasize the importance of applying stringent safety protocols in any in-person gathering (screening for illness, mask-wearing, physical distancing, hand-washing and sanitizing, increasing ventilation).
2. **Singing:** The PHO new orders says nothing about singing in churches or about choir activity more broadly in the Province. We continue to believe that limiting the number of choir singers to 4 or under, situating them at least 5 meters and turned away from all other people is best course of action for in-person worship. Some churches are even adding that their singers will be masked. In terms of rentals to choirs, see the rental section below.
3. **Smaller Church-Related Gatherings:** The new PHO order does not address smaller church related gatherings, but the Re-opening (Safety) Team strongly recommends that smaller, in-person non-liturgical gatherings/meetings are best to have online for the next two weeks. These gatherings include coffee hour, Bible Studies, classes, youth groups, ACW meetings and meetings of any kind in this general category. To go online with these gatherings is in the spirit of the new orders in which the PHO wants us all to decrease travel and social interactions in response to the rapid rise in COVID-19 cases.
4. **Christmas Fairs, Sales, Food Banks etc.:** The Re-opening (Safety) Team believes that it is permissible to go forward with these events as long as the events are very structured in the way they are done and as long as the safety protocols are strictly enforced (screening, physical distancing, the wearing of masks, hand-washing/sanitizing, and increasing ventilation).

5. **User groups:** The Re-opening (Safety) Team believes that parishes have to make up their own minds on their approach to user groups. If the user group is more like a coffee hour or if the group is together for over an hour, we recommend that the parish suspend in-person gatherings of the user group for two weeks and encourage them to meet online. If any user group continues to meet in person, that group should be stringent in the adherence to the safety protocols referenced above.

6. **Rentals:** Groups renting our spaces should already have signed a waiver. In the spirit of the PHO's new orders, what we can do is to be sure that any tenants have read the latest orders and to encourage them to strictly adhere to their own safety protocols and, where possible, to strengthen those safety protocols. According to the latest orders any rental that involves physical activity (like a yoga class, dancing, an exercise class etc.) must suspend their operations for the next two weeks. Rentals to choirs are not prohibited during this time as long as those choirs are adhering to stringent safety protocols.

We hope this will address some of your questions and concerns during this time. We are all finding our way in this as new information is shared by the PHO. Remember, the main aim is to decrease the number of interactions we all have and to strengthen safety protocols or strengthen our adherence to the safety protocols we have already been observing, all as a way to flatten the COVID-19 curve in the Province.

With respect and care,

+Melissa, Philippa+ and Tellison+



Diocese of New Westminster
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