



March 9, 2021

Yesterday, March 8, 2021 provincial health officer, Dr Bonnie Henry announced that the government is working with faith leaders to develop a plan which would see an easing of restrictions around onsite public worship in the coming weeks, and in time for Easter. Representatives from the diocese have not been part of these discussions. "It may not be what Easter celebrations have been in the past, but they will be celebrations. Unless things go off the rails, we are planning for them to be in person," said Henry.

This announcement has led to questions about what this gradual easing will look like, how soon we will know, and whether we will be worshipping together in our church buildings on Easter Sunday. This uncertainty unfortunately puts undo pressure on parish leadership and particularly our clergy at an already busy liturgical time of year, during an unprecedentedly stressful period of our lives together.

Although we have made our decisions over this past year based on the science and the guidance of the public health authorities, Bishop Anna believes that the best path forward at this time, given the uncertainty, is for parishes to continue with online Holy Week and Easter services as planned. Please expect that current diocesan restrictions around onsite worship will remain in place through April 12. As more information is released from the provincial government, the diocesan leadership will consider it alongside our own commitments and priorities.

This news will come as a disappointment for some for whom yesterday's announcement provided hope for a limited return to our church buildings in time for Easter Sunday. However, Dr Henry provided no definitive direction and was only prepared to say that it would not look like Easter as we are used to. We cannot reasonably make definitive plans to return to onsite worship based on this limited information.

But, Easter is a season, and we will look with hope and expectation that we will be able to gather again in our church buildings later this spring/early summer.