



Bishop Stephens's Pastoral Letter of January 21, 2022

Responding to the January 18 and 19 PHO's Updates

As we continue to live in the uncertainty and unpredictability of this pandemic, please know of my ongoing prayers for all of you. Please also know of my gratitude for all the hard work you continue to do to ensure that worship and the activities of each parish are done as safely and carefully as possible.

This week Dr. Bonnie Henry spoke about the current situation in the province and how we need to continue to keep to the course that we are on as we try to manage the effects of the spread of the Omicron variant of the virus associated with COVID. To that end, I simply want to clarify that there is no change from my [Pastoral Letter of December 22, 2021](#).

To summarize:

- **Masks are required but may be temporarily removed for individuals speaking, reading, singing solo or to receive Communion.**
- **If all participants are vaccinated (and this must be confirmed) then there are no capacity restrictions for worship.**
- **If all participants are not fully vaccinated (or if proof of vaccination is not checked) then there is a limit of 50% of capacity.**
- **In worship, people must continue to distance from others not in their own family, as much as is possible.**
- **Communion continues to be in one kind only with all communicants receiving the consecrated bread and the presiding priest consuming the consecrated wine on behalf of the entire community.**
- **Offertory plates are not to be passed amongst the congregation.**
- **We exchange the peace without any physical contact (except for those of the same household).**

I know that in many parishes worship has returned to online or a hybrid of online and in-person. I know that these decisions are never made lightly and that the safety of all is the guiding factor.

Social Gatherings

In response to Dr. Bonnie Henry's concern for safety and caution related to the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, coffee hours, receptions or lunches scheduled after worship **should not take place**. Wherever possible, meetings and other gatherings should not be in-person. In line with Dr Henry's protocols, this diocesan policy will remain until February 16, 2022.

I hope that this brings clarity to our current situation. Please know of my ongoing prayers for you all as this pandemic continues to influence how we worship, gather, spend time together and be in community.

May God continue to bless us and fill us with the light of this time of Epiphany.

BLESSINGS & PEACE

+ Jc