

**The celebration and sharing of communion  
and other protocols for indoor worship  
in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle**

Saskatchewan Government guidelines for higher risk activities in places of worship states: *'The celebration of communion raises specific challenges because of the possibility of inadvertently transmitting the virus. Faith communities centred on a communion ritual must exercise extreme caution if they wish to proceed with offering communion. Denominations or families of churches wishing to offer communion at this time will be required to develop protocols by which the communion can be offered in a way that safeguards the health of the communicants and celebrant. The use of a common cup is not permissible.'*

**Communion Protocol**

The use of a common cup or multiple cups or intinction is **not** permissible. Communion in one kind is recognized as a full experience of the Sacrament.

Those preparing the elements and vessels for Holy Communion must use excellent hygiene procedures. (Guidelines for cleaning and disinfection practices are listed in the Saskatchewan Government guidelines for places of worship). In places where there is no water supply, flasks of hot and cold water and detergent should be taken to the church building.

Clergy and assistants are to wash and sanitize their hands before worship begins, again before the Eucharistic Prayer and again after distributing Communion. Again for some churches this will require water, soap and bowl being brought to the building.

Ciborium and paten with wafers are to be covered with a cloth before the Prayer over the Gifts and during the Eucharistic Prayer. All elements are to be removed from the altar or covered after the distribution of communion.

Only the celebrant is to consume the priest wafer and chalice contents

If the presiding minister has underlying health conditions (although not sick) or is otherwise vulnerable, a communion assistant is to distribute Holy Communion. If there is no one available, new assistants for the altar should be trained, or Morning Prayer be said.

Clergy and communion assistants are to wear a mask when distributing Holy Communion.

Clergy and assistants do **not** wear gloves when distributing Holy Communion.

It is preferred, by government advisors, that communion be taken to communicants in their pew. This reduces movement in the church and limits both possible close contact by congregants with others, and hand contact with surfaces around the church.

However, if this is not possible, while still practicing physical distancing, communicants sanitize their hands as they proceed to a single point where the communion wafer is distributed. They are to be

directed back to their seats in an organized fashion, leaving physical distance between extended family groups. If possible, return to pews a different way.

However, if the choice is for communicants to line up across the sanctuary. I advise that people stand to receive communion. If communion rails are touched they should be wiped with a sterilizing wipe after the communicant leaves.

The 2 meter distance to be adhered to between members of extended households.

A question has been raised about laying out the communion wafers on a tray or even on a (clean) rail and people picking up a wafer from the tray or place on the rail. I would advise against this practice .

It is recommended that to minimize close contact, the communicant pauses two meters away from the minister, who says, "The body of Christ," to which the response "Amen" is given. The communicant then proceeds to receive the wafer.

The minister should take special care not to touch the communicant, or should pause to wash or sanitize hands again, if contact is made.

Wafers or gluten-free crackers to be used rather than a loaf of bread.

Clergy and communion assistants wash and sanitize their hands before and after distribution.

#### Other Protocols for indoor worship

Prior to September 1<sup>st</sup> 2020, indoor congregations for public worship are not to exceed the maximum number of 30.

From September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 'The total number of people participating in the services' (includes weddings and funerals) 'cannot exceed 30 per cent of seating capacity or 150 people, whichever is less. To help ensure safety, individuals must be separated by two meters, unless they are part of the same extended household group.' The term "extended household group" recognizes that there may be members of a household bubble that do not reside together but may now sit together.

The "Child and Youth Day Camp Guidelines" also apply to places of worship. These Day Camp guidelines can be adapted as needed for shorter programs such as "Vacation Bible Schools", religious education, Sunday School, children's clubs or youth programs.

See: <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus/re-open-saskatchewan-plan/guidelines/child-and-youth-day-camp-guidelines>

In most cases, to fulfil the 2 meter self-distancing rule, a 2-pew gap is to be maintained between occupied pews. i.e. 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> pews to be occupied. This is especially helpful if there is more than one service on a given day. Then the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> pews etc. can be occupied minimizing the clean up between services that would normally be required.

Books and other common-use items should be removed from use, if possible. Projecting materials or distribution of single-use materials can be considered. A revised guideline now states that Books or items that can't be disinfected should be removed and held for **24** hours before being brought back into use. If there is more than one service on a given days, the books in the previously occupied pews will need to be removed.

Objects that cannot be disinfected between uses should not be distributed. If objects cannot be disinfected, the place of worship must determine the means by which they can be discarded after use to prevent contamination, such as paper bulletins or other single-use materials.

All physical contact, such as handshaking or passing objects between individuals, is not permitted. Ushers, greeters or other guest services must maintain physical distancing and avoid physical contact with worshippers.

Passing of offering baskets is not be permitted. Alternatives are encouraged, such as online giving options or a depository to accept offerings.

Microphones are not to be shared between individuals due to the difficulty of cleaning and disinfecting these devices. Minimize the number of attendees providing readings or performing other activities that would require the use of a microphone.

Singing is a high-risk activity because the virus can be transmitted through saliva or respiratory droplets. One documented COVID-19 outbreak resulted in the spread of the virus to 87 per cent of choir attendees from one infected person. Therefore, singing is not recommended at this time.

The Government guidelines also state that though singing is not recommended, when singing, participants must wear masks.

The use of woodwind and brass instruments may also increase the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus due to the aerosolized respiratory fluids. As such, they are not recommended at this time.

Where leaders of services are required to sing, they must increase the distance between the congregation to prevent transmission of respiratory droplets and/or wear a mask. No increased distance requirement is stated but be cautious and at least double the distance.

Wearing of masks should be encouraged for indoor worship and indoor meetings and must be worn when singing.

Except for communion wafers, **Food and drink may not be served in places of worship.** This is a public health order and subject to strict enforcement. All food and beverage service must be suspended at this time.

If outdoors, a bag lunch and own drinks are okay, but must not be shared with others, except members of your own extended household group.

Please inform the bishop of the decision of your vestry or parish council whether or not your church(s) plan to re-open for worship.