

Revised Guidelines reviewed as of December 9, 2021 for BC Synod Congregations

COVID-19 Restrictions for Faith-Based Organizations
All religious indoor worship services in all regions of BC
Guidance for Holding Low Risk Worship Services
Update for Norther Health Region

Be Informed	Notes
<p>Update for the NORTHERN HEALTH REGION as of December 9, 2021 nh-gatherings-events-orders-dec-2021.pdf (northernhealth.ca)</p> <p>F. WORSHIP SERVICES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Patrons individually may attend a place of worship for the purpose of prayer or quiet reflection. 2. A person may permit a place to be used for, may organize or be present at a worship service if the provisions of the Part are complied with. 3. A faith community may use up to 50% of the seated capacity of a place for a worship service if, <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the officiant and all participants over the age of 11 years are vaccinated; (b) a COVID-19 safety plan is available upon request by enforcement officers. 4. A person must not permit a place of worship to be used for, or organize, lead or participate in, a worship service inside or outside, unless the officiant and all participants over the age of 11 years are vaccinated. 5. Virtual worship service or drive-in service may be provided. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) If a drive-in service is held, patrons must only attend with members of their household and remain in the vehicle for the duration of the service. 6. A participant must not gather with other participants during, before or after a virtual worship service <p>Update as of December 3, 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship services must be limited to 50% of seated capacity, unless all the participants are vaccinated, in which case the capacity could increase to 100%. While the BC Vaccine Card is an option available for this purpose, faith leaders will have the flexibility to design their own system to ensure that all participants are 	<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 10px;"> <p>In accordance with the order of the provincial health officer, a COVID-19 safety plan is no longer required (except for the Interior) but should have a communicable disease plan in place. The plan does not have to be posted.</p> <p>Safety plan: WorkSafeBC's COVID-19 Safety Plan WorkSafeBC</p> <p>Communicable disease plan: Communicable disease prevention: A guide for employers WorkSafeBC</p> </div> <p>Synod COVID-19 Response Team is available to assist you:</p> <p>Lower Mainland (A-L): Jean Jay jeangunn8@hotmail.com</p> <p>Lower Mainland (M-Z) and Vancouver Island: Karen Lee kelee2018karen@gmail.com</p> <p>Northern BC: Robin Dielissen dielissen.rd@gmail.com</p> <p>Southern Interior: Pr. Brian Krushel flcpastor@shaw.ca</p>

vaccinated if that is the model they choose to follow. This applies to those 12 years+ (see below link for Worship services under Section E, page 14)

[PHO Orders - Gatherings and Events \(COVID-19\) 3DEC21 FINAL.pdf](#)

- All participants (5 years+) attending worship services, including choirs, must wear a face covering during worship services, including as participants come in to the place of worship and when they leave, until outside. (see below link regarding Face Coverings- Worship services under Section 12-15, pages 14-16)

[PHO Orders - Face Coverings \(COVID-19\) 3DEC21 FINAL.pdf](#)

Mask wear exemptions particular to worship services include:

- Food or drink consumption as part of worship ceremony
- When an officiant is speaking, chanting or singing during worship with physical distancing or barriers
- If the face covering is removed temporarily to permit a participant to engage in a worship activity that cannot be performed while wearing a face covering, for example while acting as a reader, singing a solo or actively playing a wind instrument, but not including while singing or chanting as a participant in a worship service or as part of a choir.

**** Please note that the new order requires that all operators of indoor public spaces (including faith communities) must post signage at the entrance to all indoor areas covered by this order notifying that face coverings are required to be worn in accordance with this order.**

Update as of September 13, 2021

Proof of Vaccination

[Proof of vaccination and the BC Vaccine Card - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

<p>Preparations</p> <p>Congregations must ensure they are compliant with the most recent provincial and federal health regulations as posted on government websites and Work Safe BC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The church (as the Employer) must have a communicable disease plan in place. 	<p>Communicable disease prevention: A guide for employers WorkSafeBC</p>
<p>Seating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worship services must be limited to 50% of seated capacity, unless all the participants are vaccinated, in which case the capacity could increase to 100%. While the BC Vaccine Card is an option available for this purpose, faith leaders will have the flexibility to design their own system to ensure that all participants are vaccinated if that is the model they choose to follow. This applies to those 12 years+ 	
<p>Communicate before opening</p>	<p>Notes</p>
<p>Congregations should consider being extra cautious and evaluate when the best time would be to re-open. Please inform the Covid Resource Team of your opening date.</p> <p>In Canada, a person is considered fully vaccinated when at least two weeks have elapsed after they received the final dose of a vaccine product series approved by the World Health Organization.</p> <p>Communicate what they can expect and go over the changes made to the worship space, common areas and children’s ministry to decrease risk of virus transmission. Communicate by email, mailed letter, website, poster, during virtual services and/or Youtube video. (see notes for examples of how to communicate to your congregation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Everyone should stay home if they are sick or not feeling well. Encourage anyone with symptoms of illness to use the BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool (thrive.health) or the BCCDC When to get tested.pdf (bccdc.ca) resource to know if they should seek testing for COVID-19. Include reminders in written communications (e.g., bulletins, emails etc.) and hang posters to ensure everyone checks if they’re feeling sick before attending in-person services. <input type="checkbox"/> Everyone should clean their hands frequently. 	<p>Examples of how you can communicate your re-opening:</p> <p>Poster Sample: https://bcsynod.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Welcome-Back-Sample.pdf</p> <p>Poster Template: https://bcsynod.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Welcome-Back-Template.docx</p> <p>Make this your own by inserting pictures from your own church building. This will help people visualize the changes they can expect when they are attending indoor worship</p> <p>Youtube video:</p> <p>(690) Back to church guidelines 2020 - YouTube</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Everyone eligible should be encouraged to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. <input type="checkbox"/> Everyone 5 and older who is not fully vaccinated is recommended to wear a mask during indoor worship services. <input type="checkbox"/> Give others space. Faith leaders should encourage everyone to spread out and continue to use barriers and space markers. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep things clean. Regular cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces can help prevent the spread of illnesses, including COVID-19. 	
<p>Preparing for Worship</p>	<p>Notes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Print and share the message about staying safe and moving forward at a pace that feels comfortable. See posters in Notes. <p>Mask wear exemptions particular to worship services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Food or drink consumption as part of worship ceremony <input type="checkbox"/> When an officiant is speaking, chanting or singing during worship with physical distancing or barriers <input type="checkbox"/> If the face covering is removed temporarily to permit a participant to engage in a worship activity that cannot be performed while wearing a face covering, for example while acting as a reader, singing a solo or actively playing a wind instrument, but not including while singing or chanting as a participant in a worship service or as part of a choir. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider recommending or asking those who are unvaccinated to attend virtual services to further help protect community safety. <input type="checkbox"/> Worship leaders should plan and practice their movement in the worship space to ensure physical distancing throughout the service. <input type="checkbox"/> Train greeters and ushers so they are familiar with traffic flows and revised practices. 	<p>Posters:</p> <p>bcs-restart-theirownpace-poster-11x17.pdf (gov.bc.ca) bcs-restart-wearmask-poster-11x17.pdf (gov.bc.ca) bcs-restart-goldenrules-poster-11x17.pdf (gov.bc.ca)</p> <p>Signage:</p> <p>Sick or self isolating? Do not enter DoNotEnter v1.1 (bccdc.ca) Cleaning and disinfecting CleaningDisinfecting_PublicSettings_PPHchanges_April_07_2021 (bccdc.ca) How to wear a mask properly Covid-SurgicalMaskv4_draft6 (bccdc.ca)</p>

Worship	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Faith leaders, their staff and volunteers should monitor compliance with prevention measures. Those unwilling to follow the prevention measures in-place should be offered virtual services on an ongoing basis and restricted from attending in-person services. <input type="checkbox"/> Make announcements about the need for non-contact greetings and remind people to refrain from shaking hands and hugging. <input type="checkbox"/> Worship leaders should not share microphones. <input type="checkbox"/> Limit people’s movement in worship to minimize the opportunities for contact. <input type="checkbox"/> When sharing of the peace, people should remain where they were sitting and may bow or open their hands in a gesture of peace to those in other pews/seats around them. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a place where worshippers can deposit physical offerings. Encourage worshippers to make contributions though electronic means. <input type="checkbox"/> Offering counters have access to gloves and enough space to maintain physical distancing. 	<p><u>All participants should consider their own health and the health of those in the group when deciding whether or not to participate.</u></p>
<p><u>Singing</u> How it Spreads (bccdc.ca)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Choirs must wear a face covering during worship services. <input type="checkbox"/> Lower the risk by singing outdoors, or indoors in a well-ventilated space. <input type="checkbox"/> Use barriers and physical distancing. <input type="checkbox"/> Participants can be limited to those who are fully vaccinated. 	

<p><u>Holy Communion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participants will be able to remove the face covering when consuming food or drink to allow for ceremonial activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Reduce COVID-19 risk by using single-use cups or offering pre-packaged beverages. <input type="checkbox"/> Worshippers should go up for communion in an organized fashion, leaving physical distance between family groups. <input type="checkbox"/> Mark to indicate the appropriate distance. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure worshippers are directed back to their seats in an organized fashion, leaving physical distance between family groups. 	
<p><u>Renters / User Groups</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> an organized event such as a reception, celebration of life reception, or other event that does not have a worship component, does require attendees to provide proof of vaccination and wear masks. For information on how your organization can verify proof of vaccination click here. <input type="checkbox"/> Outside groups may use the building provided as long as they follow all government protocols. This clause should be included in the rental agreement. <input type="checkbox"/> Include Indemnity Clause in rental contracts. See Notes. <input type="checkbox"/> Renters should have each member of their group complete a Release, Waiver of Liability (see Notes). Renters should keep forms in their file. <input type="checkbox"/> Unless the rental agreement specifies that the renter must clean and disinfect, then it is the congregation’s responsibility to ensure the facility is safe. They must have their own communicable disease plan in place. 	<p><u>Indemnity Clause for Rental contracts:</u> https://elcic.box.com/s/obli5vky0jyxzyidojcs1esluqvvyu30</p> <p>Release, Waiver of Liability, and Assumption of Risk Agreement Form relating to COVID-19: https://elcic.box.com/s/oe926id9pbo8aq99lyyttwk4qrg69e3h</p>

Returning to Other In-person Ministries of the Congregation	Notes
<p>Visitation as of July 19, 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Religious leaders may attend the home of a member of their religious community to provide religious services to the occupant. <input type="checkbox"/> Care home and hospital visits no longer require scheduled visits in advance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Screening of visitors and Infection Prevention and Control practices such as hand hygiene, use of medical masks and physical distancing remain in place. -Strongly recommend visitors be fully immunized and will be asked to provide proof of vaccination status. -Fully immunized visitors are required to wear a medical mask while moving through the facility and in common areas but are not required to wear a mask while in direct contact with the person they are visiting. 	<p>Long-Term Care Facilities & Assisted Living (bccdc.ca)</p>