



Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria

1 – 4044 Nelthorpe Street, Victoria BC V8X 2A1 – Tel: (250) 479-1331 – Fax: (250) 479-5423 – Web: rcdvictoria.org

M E M O

Date: October 27, 2021
To: Clergy, Parishes, Religious, and Staff
From: Bishop Gary Gordon
Re: New lower age for BC Public Health Order mask mandate,
and Music Ministry Covid-19 Prevention Plan

The B.C. government has released a new verbal Public Health Order on face coverings (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/info/restrictions#masks>). In accordance with this order, *we will now require face coverings for all people born in 2016 or earlier (ages 5 and up)* for all activities in church buildings in the Diocese of Victoria, including worship services.

The Public Health Order lists a number of conditions under which a person is not required to wear a face covering. These exceptions must be respected, and compassion, good judgement, and pastoral sensitivity are encouraged.

Further, in consultation with the Diocesan Liturgical Commission and music ministers from parishes throughout our Diocese, a Music Ministry Covid-19 Prevention Plan has been developed. **The Diocese of Victoria requires singers and musicians to adhere to its policies for rehearsing and leading singing at church services.** The Prevention Plan may be found attached, or online at <https://www.rcdvictoria.org/news/responsetocovid19-0>. Please share this information with the music ministers in your parish.

As always, we thank you for your patience and understanding as we journey together through these challenging times.

**MUSIC MINISTRY COVID-19 PREVENTION PLAN
FOR THE DIOCESE OF VICTORIA
OCTOBER 27 2021**

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness. Sometimes people with COVID-19 have mild illness, but their symptoms may suddenly worsen in a few days. Speaking and singing lead to the release of large respiratory droplets, which are the primary route of transmission for COVID-19. The forceful exhalations associated with loud singing can result in greater numbers of particles being released. As a result, the risk of COVID-19 transmission is increased when people are singing together in-person. This is especially true for large groups; spaces that do not allow for adequate physical distancing; indoor venues with poor ventilation; and when microphones, music stands, or music binders are shared.

To encourage worship and make singing safer, the Diocese of Victoria requires singers and musicians to adhere to the following policies for rehearsing and leading singing at church services:

- A Leader of Song plus accompanist, or a small group (2-6 people), are the best options to safely lead the music at services.
- A larger church choir (7 or more people) may only be considered if there is room for all singers and musicians to maintain physical distancing of 2 meters from each other and from others in the church.
- Singing outdoors is best, or in a large indoor space with good ventilation. This means an exchange of outside fresh air or air conditioning system that uses fresh air, NOT the use of fans to recirculate the existing air in an indoor space.
- Singers and musicians should understand the risks of the spread of COVID-19 associated with singing or playing in a group setting.
- Those who are more likely to experience complications of COVID-19 – which may include age-related or chronic health issues – should avoid singing with others in-person, especially in larger groups.
- Parishes are welcome to limit participation in the music ministry to those who are fully vaccinated if they so wish.
- Anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID, who has symptoms of COVID-19, who has been warned that they have been in contact with another person diagnosed with COVID-19, or who has been advised to self-isolate must not attend rehearsals or church services.
- Singers and musicians must sanitize their hands on entry to rehearsals and church services.
- Singers and musicians must adhere to the Diocese of Victoria's current Directives that require all people born in 2016 or earlier (ages 5 and up) to wear face coverings during

all activities in church buildings in the Diocese of Victoria. Masks may only be removed by Leaders of Song plus accompanists, or members of a small group (2-6 people), when actively singing/playing during worship services. Members of larger church choirs (7 or more people) must wear masks at all times, including when actively singing/playing during worship services.

- Singers and musicians must remain at least two meters from others during rehearsals and church services.
- Singers and musicians must be facing one direction during rehearsals and services.
- Indoor rehearsal time must be limited to 60 minutes, as the longer the duration of a practice where people are in close proximity, the greater the risk of transmission.
- To assist in keeping church services to a reasonable duration and allowing for full assembly participation, musicians may limit hymn length, sing short anthems or play short instrumental selections as appropriate.
- Limit the amount of social time at rehearsals and refrain from close social contact (e.g. hugging and handshaking). Avoid sharing food and drink.
- Avoid sharing equipment such as music stands, microphones and music. If sharing must occur, clean and disinfect between users (e.g. keyboard instruments, chairs, percussion instruments, etc.)
- Hymn books/music bulletins/overhead screens may be made available to the assembly to enable singing while masked.