

DIOCESE OF KOOTENAY

	This Item	Replaces
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Subject: Worship in Times of COVID

Over the past two years, we have lived through evolving policies and practices in our common worship life. Effective today, all previous policies regarding worship in times of COVID are rescinded. We shall, of course, continue to follow any guidelines and rules provided by the British Columbia and Canadian governments as those are made known to us.

Thank you to all parish and congregational leaders who have adapted community practices to keep everyone as safe as possible. I realize that this has sometimes been a painful and frustrating process. Thank you for your graceful accommodation to the constantly changing circumstances. I thank God for your faithful care of your communities during these trying times.

Here are updates to policy and guidelines as we learn to live with COVID:

Sharing the Common Cup (with thanks to Dean David Tiessen who drafted the original version):

Since returning to in-person worship, we have been offering the sacrament in the bread at Holy Communion, but not sharing the wine from the common cup. The church's teaching has long been that to receive the sacrament in one kind only is still to receive full communion, and so this has served us well through this time of extra caution (and will of course always be an option for those who don't wish to receive the common cup).

Even as life with COVID and influenza continues, a re-introduction of the common cup is now an option for parishes of the Diocese of Kootenay.

In a presentation titled ["The Common Cup and SARS-CoV-2 Infection Risk"](#) by the Rev. Michael Garner (MSc, MDiv), Public Health Advisor to the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, it was noted that the primary transmission route of COVID is respiratory rather than via surface contact, and that the risk of COVID infection from the surface of the cup is extremely low when a silver chalice is used. In light of this, Diocesan leadership has decided that it is time to make the common cup available once again as part of our celebration of Holy Communion.

For some, this will be a matter of immediate rejoicing, while for others it will take more time to become comfortable once again. That's fine! There is no pressure! Priest and Church Councils together need to make the decision about timing and local practice. I would note that ***intinction (dipping the bread into the wine) is not an option, as that necessarily includes contact with peoples' hands***, not to mention the introduction of gluten to the wine; I would also note

that those who wish to acknowledge the Cup without receiving the wine, may simply touch the base of the Cup and hear again the words "The Blood of Christ, the Cup of Salvation."

Sharing the Peace; Handshaking after Worship

Our society's awareness of the transmission of various viruses through physical contact has increased. Many of us are less comfortable with handshaking and hugs than we might have been previously. As we move into cold and flu season, I ask that we be respectful of people's comfort levels with physical contact. Bowing, fist bumps, elbow bumps, and eye contact remain good ways of greeting one another and sharing Christ's peace with each other.

Masks

Unless masks are again required by provincial mandate, I do not require that masks be worn during worship. They are still, however, recommended.

Exceptions, for the time being, are:

- Communion ministrants should wear masks during distribution of communion
- Church committees are free to require masks in worship if the committee believes that the worship community has enough vulnerable members who would benefit from that requirement.

Hybrid Services

I encourage congregations to continue to offer hybrid worship whenever possible. This allows homebound, vulnerable, and other people to gather with the community.