

The following are adjustments to the “Many Members, One Body” Guidance, as implemented by the Diocese, to reflect recent changes to Government Guidance and Directives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In instances where the following is in conflict with the wording of the “Many Members, One Body” Document, this update will take precedence.

18 September 2020

Congregational Singing, Church Choirs, and the use of Wind Instruments during gatherings of Public Worship

Singing is classified as a high-risk activity when it comes to the transmission of COVID-19. Singing produces a greater amount of aerosol virus (virus particles that are suspended in the air and can remain suspended for hours) as opposed to droplets which tend to fall to the ground once emitted. This aerosolization makes transmission of the virus more efficient if proper safeguards are not employed.

The only protection against aerosoled virus is ventilation – neither masks, distancing, nor hand washing can protect you from contracting the virus when it is aerosoled, thus, for any Congregation that wishes to incorporate singing into their worship, ventilation will be paramount to protecting those gathered. Considering the vast majority of our Church Buildings do not have proper mechanical air ventilation systems dictates that singing can only be introduced into our gatherings on a limited basis.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador released new guidance that allows for singing, choirs, and the use of wind instruments in public gatherings. This guidance is generic across many types of gatherings and is not specifically directed towards the use of singing, choirs, and instruments in public worship. It is intended by the Government that this guidance be the foundation as to the employment of singing, choirs, and instruments in our own setting and purpose. They have advised us that their guidance will have to be adjusted to safely incorporate it into our circumstances. As such, we have consulted with them in this regard.

As with all other aspects of our response to these circumstances, the end result is not ideal and will not be, in some settings, easy to undertake. It is but another step forward and is, certainly, not the last step. This document, as a part of the “Many Members” document, will be adjusted and evolve as the situation dictates.

Just because the Government has relaxed restrictions in this regard does not mean that every Parish must incorporate singing, choirs, and wind instruments into their public worship gatherings. Based upon the ability of the Parish to incorporate the following safeguards, and based upon how comfortable and safe the worshipping community feels in participating in this high-risk activity, will determine if a Parish should incorporate these aspects of worship into their liturgy at this time.

When people contact the Registrar(s) of your Parish to register to attend a Service, they must be informed that singing will be a part of the worship and that singing is a high-risk activity when it comes to transmission of the virus. This is essential so as participants have all the information necessary to make an informed decision as to whether or not they should attend public worship at this time.

A congregational hymn can be shared as the final hymn of the service just prior to the conclusion of the worship gathering. Any singing prior to this final hymn should be provided by a soloist or Choir with the congregation humming along if they choose. Such soloists or Choir must be positioned at least 12 feet away from the Congregation.

The Sung Eucharist and other Sung liturgies are not permitted at this time.

Congregational Hymn Sings or other such liturgies that involve the singing of numerous hymns collectively are not permitted at this time. A Gospel Concert or other such gathering that does not involve congregational singing (or may include a congregational song as the final selection prior to the conclusion) may take place as long as it is no longer than 30 minutes in duration, and the Choir and/or Band is positioned at least 12 feet away from the Congregation.

All people singing must wear a mask while singing.

Singers should not sing facing each other.

Singing must be done with a normal voice at normal or lower volume.

Services involving singing cannot be longer than 60 minutes in duration. Of that 60 minutes, no more than 30 minutes, in total, can be spent singing.

Singing is NOT permitted in non-ventilated spaces. Ventilation must be maximized while singing and maintained for 1 hour following the singing. Within the 1 hour following singing, the space is not to be used by anyone for any purposes. Cleaning and disinfecting of the Church must wait until the 1-hour ventilation time is completed.

Churches with a mechanical air ventilation system should increase the percentage of outdoor air to potentially as high as 100%, disable demand-control that reduce air supply based on temperature and occupancy, increase air filtration to as high possible and minimize filter bypass during any gathering that involves singing and should maintain the mechanical air ventilation system at these settings for a minimum of 1-hour following singing.

Churches not equipped with mechanical air ventilation systems, must maximize natural ventilation during any gathering that involves singing and maintain that ventilation for a minimum of 1-hour following singing.

Choir Members and/or Band Members, if not of the same “bubble”, must be physically distanced (6 feet) from each other and be positioned at least 12 feet away from the Congregation when performing as a Choir or performing up as a Band.

These guidelines apply fully to Choir and/or Band practices held outside of any Public Worship Gathering.

Accommodation for Gatherings exceeding 100 people

The Government has made accommodation that large venues with a capacity of 500 people or more that wish to host gatherings of more than 100 people may submit an operating plan for review/approval by a Service NL Environmental Health Officer.

Any application to accommodate a gathering exceeding 100 people within any church owned property can only be initiated by Synod Office following the request of a Parish and the provision, by the Parish, of all necessary information and documentation required to make such an application. Such application will require Executive Committee approval prior to submission to Government Authorities.

Continuance of Ban on Social Gatherings prior to, or following, a service

Social gatherings that normally occur before and after a service (e.g. communal dinners and lunches) are not permitted at this time.

Use of Service Books and Hymn Books

Common use items such as books and hymnals may be used if set aside for at least 24 hours between uses. The use of single use bulletins, orders of service, and hymn sheets, or projection of the same, is strongly recommended and encouraged.

Bathroom Cleaning

Public washrooms need only be cleaned and disinfected before and after each public gathering.

Accommodation for the Sharing of Stationary Microphones

Microphones used for speaking during public worship which are stationary (Lectern or Pulpit Microphone) may be shared utilizing the following guidelines:

Hand held and/or lapel-headset microphones are not to be shared.

Stationary, mounted microphones must have the mouthpiece of the microphone covered with a single use plastic covering – such as a small ziplock sandwich bag.

Between users the single use plastic covering must be changed. The person designated to change the covering must do so being careful to keep their hands away from their face, dispose of the used covering appropriately and safely, and sanitize their hands.

The parts of the microphone not covered by the plastic cover must be disinfected between users.

The top of the Lectern, Pulpit, or Podium, if the microphone is positioned over one, or attached to one, must be disinfected between users. This would be the area of the Lectern, Pulpit, or Podium that would normally be touched by the hands.

Pastoral Visitations to Eastern Health Sites (Long Term Care & Acute Care)

Clergy are advised that they are now permitted to visit residents in Eastern Health Long Term Care facilities and patients in Eastern Health Acute Care Facilities. They will be required to follow any appropriate Infection Prevention and Control recommendations; pass screening requirements, wear a mask, other Personal Protective Equipment if required, and perform appropriate hand hygiene.

Please note that Home Communion is NOT permitted at this time. To enter someone's home to perform a Home Communion, even though invited to do so by the homeowner, is in contravention of Public Health Guidelines unless the Cleric is a member of that person's "extended bubble" (the members of two households plus six (6) other people).

Indoor Gatherings to accommodate Church Related Ministries and Activities

Parishes that have received permission from the Bishop to re-open, and desire to resume in-person Faith Formation Activities for Children and/or other in-person gatherings as permitted by the Diocese at this time, may do so no earlier than 28 days following their first Sunday service since re-opening.

This applies to gatherings being held inside our Church Buildings. Outdoor Activities are permitted in so far as Public Health and Diocesan Guidance and Directives are fully adhered to as applicable to any given situation.

For indoor gatherings, following the 28-day waiting period, the following applies:

Resumption of Sunday School, Godly Play, Confirmation Groups, and other Faith Formation Gatherings for Children.

Offering of infant and child minding, is not recommended at this time. Preschool aged children should stay with their families for the duration of the service.

For parishes that wish to resume Faith Formation Activities for Children, either during Sunday Worship, or as a separate, stand-alone gathering, the gathering should be adherent, in as far as it is applicable, to the Guidance provided by the Government for **Recreation and Sport Based After School** Programs:

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/information-sheets-for-businesses-and-workplaces/recreation-and-sport-based-after-school-programs/>

Remember that, in indoor public settings, masks must be worn by people 5 years of age or older. Children between the ages of 2 and 4 are encouraged to wear a mask, yet, it is not mandatory. Masks should not be worn on children under the age of 2 or by people with physical or mental health exemptions as specified under Government Guidance:

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/non-medical-masks-use-in-public/>

Resumption of Vestry, Parish Council, Committee Meetings and other like gatherings such as ACW and Men's Service Groups.

It is recommended, in as far as possible, that these gatherings continue on-line. Should the need arise to conduct any of these gatherings in person, the following guidelines should be adhered to:

Indoor public gatherings are restricted to no more than 100 people in so far as physical distancing can be maintained between people;

Members must be sat with 6 feet of distance between members;

Increase ventilation within the room as you are meeting;

Members wear masks when they are not seated;

No common use items to be used or food/beverages to be shared - people should bring their own tea/coffee/water bottles, meeting items such as Agendas and notes/pencils should be individual use items placed on their chairs prior to arrival;

Insure that when people arrive they go directly to their seat and remain there, when people leave they leave directly - no congregating;

A hand sanitation station should be provided and used by all members entering and exiting;

A list of names and phone numbers are recorded and maintained for 14 days for purposes of contact tracing;

The meeting area should be properly cleaned and disinfected between users;

If bathrooms are to be used there should be a cleaning and disinfection of the bathroom before and after the gathering;

Members who are feeling unwell, or should be self isolating, are not permitted to attend;

Members of the vulnerable population need to be aware that they are at greater risk of severe outcomes if they contract the virus and need to give careful thought if they should participate in mass gatherings in light of that risk;

If singing should take place within the meeting or gathering, the guidelines as set out by the Diocese with respects to singing must be adhered to.