



Office of the Bishop

New Health Orders for Worship Services

2 December 2021

Dear Pastors, Assoc. Pastors, and Parishioners,

Greetings and Peace in the Lord!

As of 30 November 2021, the Provincial Government has issued new Provincial Health Orders to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection during worship services. The reasoning centres around the greater risk at this time of year, and the increase in faith gatherings and social interactions associated with Christmas. The two changes are as follows:

1. Masks have been made mandatory for worship services. This also includes those who sing in music ministry or choirs. Fortunately, we have all been wearing masks already, so this change is inconsequential, except for our music ministry. A person can remove their mask for Holy Communion and once outside the Church.

Readers are allowed to speak without a mask subject to distancing requirements being met or a barrier to prevent transmission.

It is important for masks to be worn properly to be effective. They must cover one's nose and mouth. If a person cannot wear a mask plus or minus 1 hour, it might be better to attend Mass virtually or in their vehicle through FM broadcast.

2. Our capacity limit for worship services has been reduced to 50% of seated capacity. (NOTE: your fire capacity may be different than your seated capacity and should be verified.) This means that you will need to:
 - a) determine your seated capacity
 - b) have a person or persons monitor numbers as parishioners enter the church
 - c) use your hall when your church has reached capacity (50% seated capacity applies in the hall)
 - d) use your parking lot and FM broadcast so that people are not turned away (Holy Communion will need to be provided to the people in their cars)
 - e) live stream Mass if you are not already doing so

All previous preventative measures remain in place re: hand sanitizing, social distancing, etc.

As we approach the season of Christmas, this is not the direction I was hoping for. Yet, I believe that each other's safety and peace of mind are paramount when attending Mass or other church services.

While definitely an inconvenience, this is an opportunity, as with all the other inconveniences that COVID has brought, to grow in merit and grace. Our Faith tells us that our pain and sufferings can be offered up for the good of one another, our world and other spiritual intentions. This is another occasion to do so.

Thank you for your continued patience and cooperation in light of these changes. God bless you.

Sincerely in Christ our Lord,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gregory J. Bittman". The signature is stylized with a large initial "G" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

✠ Gregory J Bittman
Bishop of Nelson