Catholic Diocese of Victoria
Office of the Bishop

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MUSIC MINISTRY COVID-19 PREVENTION PLAN
- updated December 12, 2022 –

Guidelines and Best Practices for Parishes in the Diocese of Victoria
during COVID-19 and the annual flu season

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 recommends that singers and musicians adhere to the following guidelines and best practices for rehearsing and leading singing at church services:

- Singers and musicians should understand the risks of the spread of COVID-19 associated with singing or playing in a group setting.

- 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.

- 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.

- The use of face coverings is optional for singers and musicians. However, the continued use of face coverings is highly recommended as a prudent and wise choice to ensure the safety of all.

- Singers and musicians are recommended to sanitize their hands on entry to rehearsals and 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) should 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, for both services and rehearsals.

- When singing in a large indoor space, good ventilation is important. 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 the indoor space.

- Singers and musicians should be facing one direction during rehearsals and services.

- The length of rehearsal time should be considered, as the longer the duration of a practice where people are in close proximity, the greater the risk of transmission. For example, if practices are longer than 60 minutes, there should be ventilation breaks (clearing of the practice space) after every 45 minutes of practice.

- Social time and close social contact (e.g. hugging and handshaking) at rehearsals should be limited, and sharing food and drink avoided.

- To assist in keeping church services to a reasonable duration and allowing for full assembly participation, musicians may limit hymn length, sing shorter anthems or play instrumental selections as appropriate.

- 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. Masking while singing is recommended for all.

For further information and advice about singing under revised Ministry of Health rules, please check the B.C. Choral Federation website at https://bcchoralfed.com/resources/covid-19-resources.