



Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



Guidance for Holding Low Risk Worship Services

Updated: May 26, 2021

Introduction

As pillars of strength, religious organizations and faith-based worship services play a critical role in connecting the community by supporting beneficial and safe social interactions. As COVID-19 vaccinations are administered throughout the province, we are entering a new phase of the pandemic where we can begin to gather again to share hope, healing, restoration, and recovery together. These guidelines were developed in close collaboration with a diverse spectrum of spiritual and faith leaders and communities from across the province through a process led by SFU's Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue. The Office of the Provincial Health Officer and the province are deeply grateful to these leaders.

[BC has a plan for safe resumption of activities in the province](#), including the return of indoor and the continuation of outdoor worship services. This guidance document explains what faith leaders, members, volunteers, and others need to do to ensure worship services are conducted safely. Achieving low risk worship services relies on everyone who organizes and attends them. Paying close attention to the precautions outlined in this guidance will support the eventual resumption of additional activities that are still too risky right now, such as group singing and sharing food and drink in communal settings. **Please continue to monitor [the Provincial Health Officer website](#) as it will be updated periodically, as things continue to evolve over the next weeks and months.**

Variances Permitting Indoor and Outdoor Religious Worship Services

The Provincial Health Officer has issued [two variances for indoor and outdoor worship services](#). This guidance provides information on how to hold these gatherings safely and in alignment with these variances.

COVID-19 Information

Please continue to monitor the following resources for information on COVID-19 and restrictions in the province:

- For information on COVID-19, vaccine safety and efficacy, data, public health guidance, and more, visit [BCCDC](#).
- For information on the restrictions in place in the province, visit [BC's Restart Plan](#).
- For information on how to get vaccinated against COVID-19, visit [GetVaccinated](#).



Ministry of Health



BC Centre for Disease Control

If you have fever, a new cough, or are having difficulty breathing, call 8-1-1.



Holding Low Risk Indoor Worship Services

Updated May 26, 2021

Definition of Indoor Worship Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes funerals and baptisms if they are a part of the regular service. Does not include a funeral, baptism, or wedding if held on their own. To hold these events, please see personal gatherings and organized events in BC's Restart Plan.
Capacity Limit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 50 people per worship service, including all leaders, staff, soloists, musicians, etc. 2 additional people can be present to help make sure everyone follows precautions.
Space Between Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 metres unless they are from the same household.
Multiple Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple services can be held in a day as long as there is enough time (e.g., 15 minutes) in between services for cleaning and for participants to leave without interacting with those waiting to enter the next gathering. For larger venues, more than one indoor service can occur at the same time as long as one group of people does not come into contact with another group (this means each gathering needs its own entrances, exits, and washroom facilities). Indoor services and outdoor services can occur at the same time as long as one group of people does not come into contact with another group (this means each gathering needs its own entrances, exits, and washroom facilities).
Mask Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks need to be worn for indoor services / gatherings. Masks can be removed by the leader, reader, soloist, and/or musical group when speaking, chanting, singing, or playing as long as these individuals are 3 metres away from the congregation or are separated by a physical barrier that blocks droplets.
Before Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants must be pre-registered; contact information must be collected and retained for 30 days for contact tracing purposes. Participants must assess their health before attending and should stay home if sick. Caution people who are at high risk of severe disease about attending in-person services. Clean and disinfect high-use areas, including tables, chairs, and door handles. Ensure enough space (at least 2 metres) is available for people to maintain distance from others. Ensure easy access to handwashing stations or hand sanitizing supplies. Increase ventilation by opening doors and/or windows for indoor services where possible.
During Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders of the service must wear a mask, removing it only for speaking, chanting, or singing, as long as there is 3 metres distance between the leader and the congregation. Limit communal settings; provide food or drink in single use containers. Maintain distance from those outside your household. Limit or refrain from passing items.
Music / Singing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only soloists and musicians can sing / play at this time.
Food / Drink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single use containers only.
After Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone should leave the venue after the service. Social gatherings can occur elsewhere under the Gathering and Events Order. Clean and disinfect high-use areas.
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Check Posters and reference materials



Holding Low Risk Outdoor Worship Services

Updated May 26, 2021

Definition of Outdoor Worship Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes funerals and baptisms if they are a part of the regular service. Does not include a funeral, baptism, or wedding if held on their own. To hold these events, please see personal gatherings and organized events in BC's Restart Plan. Does not include drive in events. To hold these events, please see the Gathering and Events Order.
Capacity Limit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 50 people per gathering / service, including all leaders, staff, soloists, musicians, etc. 2 additional people can be present to help make sure everyone follows precautions.
Space Between Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 metres unless they are from the same household or unless everyone is seated.
Multiple Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple services can be held in a day as long as there is enough time (e.g., 15 minutes) in between services for cleaning and for participants to leave without interacting with those waiting to enter the next gathering. If holding multiple services at once, separate entrances, exits, and washroom facilities must be available for each group. Indoor services and outdoor services can occur at the same time as long as one group of people does not come into contact with another group (this means each gathering needs its own entrances, exits, and washroom facilities).
Mask Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks need to be worn until seated.
Before Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants must be pre-registered; contact information must be collected and retained for 30 days for contact tracing purposes. Participants must assess their health before attending and should stay home if sick. Caution people who are at high risk of severe disease about attending in-person services. Clean and disinfect high-use areas, including tables, chairs, and door handles. Ensure easy access to handwashing stations or hand sanitizing supplies. Increase ventilation by opening doors and/or windows for indoor services where possible.
During Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders of the service must wear a mask, removing it only for speaking, chanting, or singing, as long as there is 3 metres distance between the leader and the congregation. Limit communal settings; provide food or drink in single use containers. Maintain distance from those outside your household. Limit or refrain from passing items.
Music / Singing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only soloist and musicians can sing / play at this time.
Food / Drink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single use containers only.
After Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone should leave the venue after the service. Social gatherings can occur elsewhere under the Gathering and Events Order. Clean and disinfect high-use areas.
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Check / health assessment Posters and reference materials People who are at high risk of severe COVID-19 disease

