



COVID-19 DIOCESAN RESTART PLAN FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can we use single-use communion cups?

No. The passing and sharing of the “common cup” is embedded in Anglican practice and theology. We are re-enacting the scriptural account of the Last Supper where, “when supper was ended, Jesus took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them...” This was an additional single cup, saved till the end of the meal, and shared by all. Our practice is rooted first in Christ’s own example.

Additionally, our use of a single chalice (and where possible, a single loaf) is rooted in our theological understanding that “we who are many are one Body for we all participate in the one bread” (one cup). Bishop John Baycroft, in his book *The Eucharistic Way*, adds, “We are also reminded by the one cup that we cannot drink it alone. We drink from a common cup as a strong symbol of unity and our willingness to accept each other...”

There is also a very practical reason, which is the risk involved to the person performing the ablutions: this person would have to handle and drink from every single cup which was used during the distribution of the sacrament.

For a fuller explanation, please click link on diocesan website under this question.

Could people bring their own bread and wine?

No. An important component of our eucharistic liturgy is the “breaking of the bread” for distribution to the people. This act has two meanings. First, as the “body of Christ,” the breaking of the consecrated bread symbolizes Christ’s own brokenness for our sake. Similarly, there is one cup, the cup of Christ’s own life, which is poured out for us. Second, the fact that all of us share from the same bread, and the same cup is powerful symbol of the way in which “we being many are one body” in Christ. We are literally united by taking the same food and drink into ourselves.

Why are we not permitted to use baked bread? Why must we use wafers only?

There are two reasons: one is that wafers come to us factory-sealed; bread, however, comes from someone’s kitchen—and thus its use falls under the same rubric as not sharing food prepared elsewhere. It is as much about where the bread has been, as it is about who touches it. Secondly, it is much easier to administer a wafer without touching the hands of the communicant than it is to administer a piece of bread. In other words, it isn’t the administrant’s hands one worries about—if they’ve been sanitized—it is the communicants’ hands and their potential to re-contaminate the bread as the administrant moves to the next person.

If we worship outside, can we sing?

No. At present, singing is considered a high-risk activity, because singing projects respiratory droplets farther than speaking does. In terms of spreading the virus, it is true that outdoor activities are generally considered safer than indoor activities. However, this is based on the assumption that when outdoors, people are moving about, and thus unlikely to be sharing the respiratory droplets of passersby. This would not be the case in an outdoor church service. In addition, the wind can be an important vector, carrying droplets into others' faces, even when people are appropriately distanced.

This issue continues to be studied by scientists. If conclusive evidence, or some other change, leads our public health authorities to change their advice, this policy will be updated.

Why don't we all just move our church services outside?

For some communities, as long as all protocols are observed, this could be an ideal solution. Others may determine, however, that the set-up and sanitizing of tables and chairs is too labour-intensive. In addition, there is a lot of ambient noise outdoors, and sound systems can be iffy: it could be very difficult, especially for those with hearing loss, to focus and hear what is going on.

We understand that congregational singing is not permitted, but how many people constitutes a "small choral ensemble"?

The maximum number for an ensemble is governed by the ability to keep a generous distance between singers themselves and the congregation. Between singers, there must be more than 2 meters distance, and singers must not be singing into each other's space.

Further, because singers breathe deeply and need to project their voices, there must be considerably more than two metres space between the singers and the congregation, or anyone else they are facing. We recommend a minimum of 4 meters.

Are people required to wear a mask during worship?

Masks are not required for members of the congregation but are permitted. Non-medical masks are required for clergy who administer communion.

Will the church be continuing with virtual worship when we start to gather in-person again?

Yes. We have recommended that, where possible, parishes currently offering virtual worship continue to do so for those who do not yet feel comfortable attending in-person services. The nature of the virtual worship experience may change. First, some parishes will be migrating to eucharistic worship, rather than Services of the Word. Second, several parishes are hoping to livestream Sunday worship. In this case, the service would be available in "real time," in addition to being posted on the parish's website for viewing later. Please be in touch with your local parish for more information.