



**March 10, 2020**

Dear People of the Diocese of New Westminster

This communique comes in response to the many questions I and others have gathered from parishes and individuals since I'd issued my last statement to the Diocese on March 7, 2020. Please know that I and others are doing the best we can to get out timely information to you while knowing that as the COVID-19 situation changes, we all have to make new adaptations to protect the health and safety of our parishes, parishioners and those in the community with whom we come into contact. Most of what is below is either ADVICE or information at this point. For now, each parish needs to make its best decisions about what is below. Please know that this may change as the situation changes, that is, some of what is discretionary may become things that will be mandatory.

1. **Prayers:** Many have asked me for prayer resources for this time. [Here are a collection of prayers that Archdeacon Richard Leggett has assembled for me and for us.](#) As you'll see, the prayers express a range of concerns related to our current situation. Please know that I and the Synod Office staff are praying daily for all of you. We also ask your prayers for us at this time.
2. **Sunday Coffee Hour/Social Hour:** Many have asked whether we might resume routine Coffee Hour/Social Hour on Sundays in parishes. Please know that this is complicated in that our practices and resources related to Coffee Hour are quite diverse across the Diocese. I and other faith leaders will be on a phone call later this week with the BC Minister of Health after which I will let you know if we might resume Coffee Hour/Social Hour and what specific guidelines we must observe. In the meantime, the former mandatory "suspend Coffee Hour/Social time on Sunday" still applies.

3. **Meals that our parishes offer to the community:** I'm assuming that meals offered in our churches to the community will continue for now. In order to be as safe as possible, my advice is that any meal our parishioners and other volunteers offer to the community should observe the following guidelines: a) all Food Safe regulations and practices should be followed in the on-site preparation and serving of food, with no food served that was prepared in someone's home. What this means is that someone Food Safe certified person must be in charge of any meal, b) surfaces and other areas touched by volunteers and guests should be sanitized before and after the meal, c) guests should not serve themselves—food should be served by those who serve the meal or food should be plated or placed in individual containers—no open food on self-serve platters or trays, d) guidelines for safety should be mentioned and posted at all meals, including: social distancing (spread out rather than sitting close together), no-touch greetings, washing hands before and after eating, staying away if sick or infirm, coughing/sneezing into your sleeve, not touching your face, and throwing away used tissues), and e) those who prepare and serve the food should observe practices that protect themselves.
4. **Classes, meetings and gatherings in parishes on Sunday and during the week:** At this point, I see no reason to cancel classes, meetings or smaller gatherings in parishes. My advice is that all surfaces should be sanitized before and after each class, meeting or gathering. People should also be advised of and asked to follow the same guidelines listed above (in item #3 d). If the class includes food, I would advise that people either be asked to bring their own food/snacks and be asked not to share their food with others or pre-packaged snacks be used (nothing cooked or prepared in someone's home).
5. **Those who rent our space:** At this time, I am not asking or advising you to suspend rentals of your spaces. We can, however, share our behavioural guidelines with anyone who rents our space, not in a coercive way, but as a way for them to know the kinds of things we are doing as a community to protect ourselves and others.
  - a. **Day Care Centres:** As I understand it, the hygiene practices that Day Care Centres follow are determined by the Province of British Columbia and are very stringent. Day Care Centres should simply do what they have already been doing.
  - b. **Other Worshipping Communities:** We should be sure that the spaces that our rental worshipping communities occupy (worship spaces, bathrooms and parish halls) are sanitized before and after they are used by those who rent our space.
  - c. **Other entities** (AA and other groups): I advise the same approach as with worshipping communities that occupy our space.
6. **Parish and other offices:** We need to be as diligent as possible in protecting those who work in our parish or other offices (clergy and laity) and any who may visit those offices. This means sanitizing surfaces and anything that people touch frequently, putting some distance between ourselves and those who work with us or visit, and both posting and observing the best practices referenced in #3 d.

7. **Finances:** At this point the best thing parish leaders can do to pay attention to finances and the possibility of not gathering for worship on Sunday would be to invite as many people as possible to sign up for Pre-Authorized Donations at the parish level. My next communicate will offer other ideas related to finances for the future. If you have questions about Pre-Authorized Donations, contact Rachel Taylor at [rtaylor@vancouver.anglican.ca](mailto:rtaylor@vancouver.anglican.ca) .

This is what I have to offer you for now. A communicate in the near future will focus on ideas and resources from me and others related to the strong possibility that at some point we will need to suspend in-person worship and gatherings.

I'm deeply grateful for the spirit of cooperation that many of you are expressing. Please keep our parishes and people and me in your prayers.

In Christ,  
+ Melissa