

MEMORANDUM



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of Calgary

DATE August 26, 2020
TO Priests, Deacons, and Parish Office Staff
FROM Rev. Wilbert Chin Jon
SUBJECT The Use of Churches, Meetings Rooms and Halls in Parishes

We must continually acknowledge at this time that we do not live under normal conditions.

Not everything is an essential service. Not everything is of equal importance. Parishes need to know their priorities. As well, some of the old ways of doing things can and should be modified/adapted in order for the parish to respond better to the emerging pastoral needs.

We also have to acknowledge that, currently, parish resources have diminished and that any new additions to what we offer will add to the demands on the limited resources of the parish and the Diocese. The demand and pressure that is placed on our limited number of staff and volunteers can potentially increase the operating expenses of the parish and more importantly put people's health and safety at risk.

As a general rule, if in-person meetings can be replaced through technology and can be accommodated virtually then doing so would be a better alternative. This would help alleviate the administrative requirements of oversight on health and safety protocols and procedures in the parish that would minimize risks or prevent the transmission of the virus.

At this time, the use of churches, meeting rooms and halls in parishes should only be limited to the following:

1. Essential Parish programs – While the Diocese encourages parishes to run sacrament preparation programs remotely through the direct involvement of parents using our programs in their homes, in-person sessions may be held in parish facilities when deemed necessary, i.e. baptism preparation if cannot be done online, modified RCIA, etc.
2. Essential parish group meetings that cannot be held virtually
3. Essential support groups – Support groups that had been using the parish facility before the pandemic, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, St. Vincent de Paul Society.

All existing diocesan policies on the use of parish facilities apply. (*Parish Regulations Manual Codes: HALL and PROP1*)

All Alberta Health Services' health and safety measures are to be observed: symptoms and international travel screening, proper physical distancing, proper hand hygiene, the use of face masks when proper physical distancing is not possible and when required by municipal bylaws and proper cleaning and disinfecting of facilities, furniture and equipment.

We will continue to not allow the use of parish facilities for the following:

1. Funeral lunches, family and parish social gatherings – at this time, gatherings are better held in establishments that provide food service which are governed by public health guidance for business operators and public health orders.
2. Children and youth ministry activities and school Masses with multiple classes or grades attending – Schools are opening with strict health and safety guidelines. Classrooms are being considered cohorts. We support our schools by avoiding activities in our parishes that may encourage the mixing or combining of cohorts.
3. Non-essential group activities.

All activities that are permitted to be held in our parish facilities will require the tracking of the event name, date, time and location together with the names and contact information of attendees. The list is to be submitted to the parish office for the purpose of contact tracing.

Avoid the provision of food at any of the allowable events. Individuals may bring their own food and beverages and must not be shared. When food has to be provided, only prepared and individually-packaged food and beverages are allowed in order to avoid food preparation on site and commonly-touched or shared items and surfaces which may increase the chance of the transmission of the virus.