

Recommendation for Returning to Choir/Vocal Ensemble Rehearsals

The following recommendations are based on guidelines put forth by the American Choral Directors Association and the National Association for Music Education and are based on the preliminary results of research by the University of Cincinnati – Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and Colorado State University. It is to be noted that the research upon which the following are based has not been peer reviewed nor finalized AND that singing in a group setting is still considered a high-risk activity concerning the spread of COVID-19. Please review the following, do your own research, and base your decisions on what is best for your specific situation.

Based on this research and on the below protocols, Bishop Kettler is permitting choirs and vocal ensembles to return to rehearsals beginning January 18, 2021. Protocols for small vocal ensembles to return to singing during Mass are currently being formulated with the intention of granting permission for groups of up to six (6) vocalists to resume ministry beginning with the First Sunday of Lent. The Office of Worship will be hosting an evening Zoom Meeting for all music ministers where the protocols and best practices will be discussed.

Indoor Rehearsals

- Research is showing that singing indoors is a bigger risk than singing outdoors.
- Singers should be spaced 6-10 feet apart and should all face the same direction (no 'U' shaped or circular arrangements).
- Large sanctuaries are the best choice for indoor singing. Choir lofts may be too small to accommodate for a number of singers while maintaining a distance of 6-10 feet.
- Face coverings should be worn at all times.
- Singing should take place for no longer than 30 minutes separated by a 15 to 20-minute break where all persons leave the area, allowing the air to clear.
- It is recommended that the air exchange rate be a minimum of 1-3 times per 30 minutes.
- Check with your maintenance staff to see if HEPA or MERV-13 filters are being used or can be used with the current HVAC system.
- Ventilation is of utmost importance. Leaving windows and doors open will help with this.
- Participants should avoid sharing any items (i.e. music, folders, pencils, water bottles, etc.). All necessary items should not be kept collectively in a music room, choir loft or other area. Participants should take all materials with them upon departure and should be brought back with them for rehearsals.
- Food and beverages should not be served.
- Participants should sanitize their hands often.

Congregational singing is still not permitted. Choirs/vocal ensembles are not permitted to sing during any event, liturgy, Mass or otherwise, until further notice.