

Recommendation for Returning Choirs/Vocal Ensembles to Ministry at Mass

The following recommendations are based on guidelines put forth by the Minnesota Department of Health in the document, Music Activities and Performances During COVID-19 (access [here](#)).

Based on this information and on the protocols below, Bishop Kettler is permitting choirs and vocal ensembles to return to singing during Mass beginning with the First Sunday of Lent.

Guidelines for Ensemble Singing at Mass During a Pandemic

- All guidelines put forth for rehearsals are still in place. These have been provided below for your review.
- A determination must be made for each church as to how many singers can gather while maintaining physical distancing of six feet or more at all times. A distance of 12 feet between singers is recommended when singing indoors.
- Singers from one household may stand together, but physical distancing of 6 feet or more must be maintained between households.
- Singers should all face the same direction (no 'U' shaped or circular arrangements).
- Singers may temporarily remove face masks when singing or making announcements.
- If utilizing instrumentalists, if a face mask cannot be worn while playing, they may temporarily remove their face mask during Mass and rehearsals.
- Choirs and instrumentalists must be separated from the liturgical assembly by 12 feet at all times.
- Avoid sharing equipment (i.e. music stands, microphones, percussion, hymnals, folders, etc.) and clean all equipment between uses. Churches may want to consider disposable microphone covers. A simple search online will show many options.
- With choirs returning, much consideration should be given to the importance of the participation of the liturgical assembly in the Mass. It is highly recommended that the Eucharistic acclamations continue to be recited by all present.

Congregational singing is still prohibited until further notice.

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 It is to be noted that the research upon which the following are based has not been peer reviewed nor finalized AND that singing in a group setting is still considered a high-risk activity concerning the spread of COVID-19.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 protocols below, Bishop Kettler has permitted choirs and vocal ensembles to return to rehearsals as of January 18, 2021.

Rehearsal Guidelines for Ensemble Singing During a Pandemic

- 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 prohibited until further notice.