

POLICY 2.1.1 Concerts and Other Events in Churches

Catholic churches are, first and foremost, sacred spaces dedicated to the worship of God. In the parishes of the Archdiocese, we recognize that a parish church may appear to be a desirable venue for community events. If you are interested in making such use of a Catholic church, please see the guidelines below. If you believe that the event falls within the guidelines, please follow the instructions for completing and submitting an application (Form 2.1.1.a) to produce an event in a parish church.

Guidelines for events:

1. In general, concerts should be considered occasional events.
2. As regards musical concerts, there are three designations that are applied to the types of music: Sacred music is that which has been composed for the purpose of being used in the liturgy of the Church. This includes Mass parts, compositions written specifically for use in liturgical services, and other hymns that are found in accepted Church hymnals. Religious music is that which is inspired by a religious theme, but which is not used in Church services. This is usually of a contemporary and popular nature. Secular music is that which does not have a religious theme, or its allusions to faith are faint.
3. Concerts of sacred music are allowed in the churches of the Archdiocese, with the permission of the parish priest.
4. Concerts of religious music and dramatic productions, including those which involve dance, are also allowed when they have a religious character, only with the permission of the Archbishop. Such permissions are granted in individual instances, on a case-by-case basis. A permission granted once is not to be considered a blanket approval for future events. The Archbishop's permission must be requested and received prior to making any arrangements whatsoever with concert organizers or performers.
5. Concerts that include secular music and all other presentations of dramatic works of a secular character are not allowed in the churches (nave and sanctuary) of the Archdiocese. They may be presented in other Church venues (e.g. the parish hall) with the permission of the parish priest.
6. Requests for permission to present concerts of religious or secular music, or dramatic works or other presentations of a secular character in churches and other Church sites (shrines, chapels, cemeteries) are to be made in writing to the appropriate authority at least three months prior to the proposed event, indicating the time and date of the proposed concert or performance, and the proposed program (including the names of works to be performed, along with the names of composers, speakers, playwrights, etc.)
7. All performances should lead to respect for the sacred space, and the ultimate experience of communion with the living God. Requests for concerts or other events that do not fit in with the overall pastoral plan of the archdiocese may justifiably be denied.
8. Performances which have the sole purpose of raising funds are to be avoided. Since a church, by its dedication or blessing, has been set apart for the priestly people's worship of God, it must not be

viewed merely as a convenient or novel place to use in order to make money. Similarly, we would not hold the parish's annual bazaar in the worship space. The worship space is not a suitable venue for selling musical or dramatic merchandise.

9. When the Church sponsors or hosts a performance, there is implicit support given to the work of the performer. Lyrics for songs and the text of a dramatic production must be in harmony with the Catholic Church's self-understanding and faith. For this reason, a list of the proposed lyrics and texts must be provided to the appropriate authority well in advance of the production.
10. Parishes in which concerts and other productions are held are responsible to ensure that the proper licenses have been obtained. Additional licenses may be required if copyrighted music and texts will be reprinted, projected or recorded during the performance or transmitted in any way at a later date. All applicable copyright permissions for any musical or dramatic work used in a performance in a church venue must be secured in writing either by the performer or organizer, or by designated parish representatives, and must be made available to the appropriate authority prior to the event.
11. Parishes are advised to require of performers a damage deposit, unless they intend to cover the costs of any incidental damage themselves. At the least, organizers of such events should declare in writing, by signing a contract, that they will accept legal responsibility for leaving the church in good order, for any expenses incurred, and for any damage which happens in the course of or as a result of the performance. Diocesan employees and volunteers are generally covered for property damage, bodily injury and personal injury in the course of their duties, as long as there is an allegation of fault.
12. The character of the sacred space must be retained. The greatest respect is to be shown to the altar, the tabernacle or chapel of repose, the presidential chair and the ambo. Altars may not be moved, and nothing associated with the production may be placed on the altar.
13. Musicians, singers, actors and speakers may be in the sanctuary provided that by their demeanor and attire they respect the character of the sacred space. While it is difficult to be precise about actors in costume, common sense and appreciation both of the dignity of the human person and the dignity of the worship space should be exercised in judging the appropriate dress and behavior of performers and audience alike.
14. Advance ticket sales and entrance to the performance by donation (but not both) are acceptable. However, in no case may anyone be turned away for not having sufficient funds. Where entrance to the event has been gained by advance ticket sales or donation, no other collection may be taken.
15. The cause for which funds are being raised must be made public. All proceeds from the concert must be allocated according to the advertised cause. A full accounting of all revenues, expenses and proceeds must be kept in the parish records.
16. The sale of CDs and other items may not take place within the nave of the church, but only in a narthex, foyer or hall distinct from any area used for worship.
17. To ensure a positive relationship between the parish community and the event taking place in the church, parish leadership should make every effort to be present at the event itself.

Making an application (Form 2.1.1.a)

1. Complete the form 2.1.1.a Request for Permission to Use Church for Performance or Presentation, being sure to provide the name of the parish, all the event details, the area of the church you are seeking to use, and the contact person who will be responsible for ensuring the event meets the requirements of Policy 2.1.1.
2. The contact person must also initial the form, where indicated, to show that he/she has read and understands the information therein.
3. Submit the completed form to the parish priest/office if the event is a concert of sacred music or you are applying to use only the church hall. For all other requests, please submit them to the Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan, by email to archbishop.agm@live.ca or by mail to: 10301 102 Street, Grande Prairie AB T8V2W2.

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