



THE DIOCESE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN SOUTH CAROLINA

STANDING COMMITTEE

August 25, 2021

Dear faithful people of the Diocese of South Carolina,

Earlier this month, the Standing Committee published an update to diocesan guidelines regarding coronavirus precautions. Our hope is that these guidelines have proved to be helpful as congregations continue to navigate the latest wave of the pandemic. As you may recall, when we published the updated guidelines, we promised to update them at least monthly. As we are seeing cases continue to climb across the state, we felt it would be timely to provide an update based on recent conversations we have had with experts in epidemiology from MUSC. We continue to monitor the situation closely, and we will update our guidelines based on the information and advice of our experts. Above all, we are grateful for the leadership being shown in all of our congregations as we seek to implement the best practices to protect the health of our members.

In consultation with medical professionals, other dioceses, and with the consent of our Bishop-elect, we strongly recommend all congregations in our diocese adopt the following precautionary measures to ensure that we all remain safe from COVID:

- Encourage all parishioners to get vaccinated. Please consider providing assistance, such as transportation or access to medical resources, as necessary.
- If possible and practicable, congregations should obtain and retain up-to-date contact information for all service attendees in order to facilitate contact tracing should infection occur associated with your service.
- Remind parishioners and staff to stay home when experiencing any symptoms and seek COVID-19 testing at the onset of symptoms.
- All parishioners, clergy, and staff wear masks for indoor services and during office hours when others are present, leaving them in place at all times during services.
- Maintain distances of 6 feet between households of parishioners for indoor services.
- Services and fellowship gatherings should take place outdoors whenever possible.
- Continue or implement online worship for adults and children as well as holding meetings virtually whenever possible.
- Holy Communion is to continue in one kind only; avoiding any circumstance in which parishioners or staff are not appropriately distanced (6 feet).
- **Parishioners pass the peace without physical contact and maintaining social distancing.**
- **Hand sanitizer and masks should be made readily available for all.**

- Nursery, children's chapel or Sunday school, leadership and families should exercise informed prudence and appropriate safety measures to include suspension of these services until further notice.
- Participants wear masks covering mouth and nose when congregational or choral music is a part of a service. This includes practice and preparatory sessions as well.
- If any congregation has plans for a large gathering this fall, we highly recommend postponing such gatherings so as to minimize chances of spreading infection. We know the disappointment this may cause; we were saddened to announce the postponement of the long-anticipated clergy retreat.

As we stated when these guidelines were originally updated, will revisit them at least monthly or more often as conditions change. For specific information about your county, please see: https://covidactnow.org/us/south_carolina-sc/?s=21201043 or the CDC website <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker> . Keep in mind that the CDC initially recommended indoor gatherings only when the positive test rate fell below 5%.

We remain grateful for your prayers, patience, and faithfulness.

Peace and blessings,



The Reverend Rob Donehue, President, on behalf of the Standing Committee