

Guidelines for Public Worship

The Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina

May 26, 2021

1. All restrictions on building capacity and on physical distancing are now removed.

- That said, some congregation may choose to reserve a section of their space for those who would prefer to keep physical spacing from others. Others may choose to offer physical spacing at one service but not another. All provided options should be well advertised. None should require that people be asked to prove their vaccination status.

2. With regard to the need for face masking, individuals and congregations should adopt the following framework in planning for public worship:

- **All may wear a face mask.** Each of us will have a different comfort level about being with others in public. Those gathering for public worship should feel welcome to wear a face mask if they prefer to do so. Some may choose to wear a face mask when they cannot maintain physical distance from others.
- **Some should wear a face mask.** The CDC recommends that those who have not yet been vaccinated should wear a face mask when they are in close quarters with others. This would apply to children who are too young to be vaccinated, those who cannot be vaccinated, and those who have not chosen to be vaccinated.
- **None must wear a face mask.** In this sense, we are following our Governor's most recent Executive Order. But we can certainly hope that all who should wear a face mask will do so!

3. Congregations may establish and implement a more restrictive plan with regards to building capacities, physical distancing and face masks, but must do their best to accommodate all people, those vaccinated and those not.

4. At this time, during celebrations of Holy Eucharist, congregations are to continue offering only bread, preferably using wafers rather than a loaf. As a sign of hospitality, Clergy and Lay Eucharistic Ministers might consider choosing to be masked during distribution of the bread. Before too much more time passes, we will develop and distribute recommendations for how to most safely share wine during Communion.

5. Singing is once again allowed as a part of worship, both by choirs and congregations. Musicians should be given the same choices as others present, with regards to distancing and face masking.

6. With respect to the exchange of the Peace, the collection of an offering, and any other worship practices that have been modified during these past months, congregational leaders should reintroduce these practices gently and at an appropriate pace, teaching those gathered for worship to be respectful of the needs of those others who are around them.

7. In celebrating Holy Baptism, Clergy may choose to continue with preventative measures such as those recommended last May, or they may negotiate greatly reduced precautions with those who will be involved.

8. All involved in ministries with children, and in particular with children who are too young to be vaccinated, should continue to wear a mask and practice physical distancing. Patterns such as you have been following should probably be continued for the time being.

9. Congregations may return to hosting coffee and receptions after worship and at other times. Safer practices should be followed, including the provision of individual servings rather than the offering of a potluck meal.

Guidelines are effective as of May 26, 2021 and will remain in effect until such time as they are replaced or removed.