



## THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

1210 Locust Street | St. Louis, MO 63103 | 314-231-1220 | [diocesemo.org](http://diocesemo.org)

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 12, 2022

*St. Gregory the Great, Bishop and Theologian, 604 C.E.*

*"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer." - Romans 12:12*

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Over the past two years of pandemic, we have been faithful to our call to follow Jesus and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We have been diligent in wearing masks, nimble in adapting to new realities, and compassionate in seeking the well-being of others. We have grieved and we have celebrated, we have been patient in affliction and faithful in prayer.

In the last few weeks, we have seen the numbers of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations rapidly decline, all the while vaccinations continue to rise. There are glimmers of hope on the horizon.

Effective **March 15, 2022**, the attached guidelines and recommendations take effect for all communities of faith that comprise the Diocese of Missouri to enable us to best share the love of Christ in our communities and neighborhoods.

While masks are no longer required but recommended for worship and indoor gatherings, I encourage you to be mindful of those who choose to continue to wear masks. Our communities of faith are made up of diverse abilities, understandings, cultures, and traditions, and we seek to respect the dignity of every human being. I encourage you to carefully and prayerfully consider how best to offer Christ-centered hospitality, especially to those who are immunocompromised and unvaccinated within the community.

I am eternally grateful to the members of the Diocesan Pandemic Task Force for their dedication and diligence in helping us navigate this time of pandemic. We continue to live in hope that we are entering an endemic stage in the COVID-19 pandemic, where all restrictions might be lifted. Know that you are in my prayers and I ask yours as well.

Yours in Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Deon K. Johnson  
Eleventh Bishop of Missouri



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1. Churches should ultimately base their decisions on the risk in their area based on their risk level as defined by the [Centers for Disease Control](#). **Masks are optional for Sunday worship if your risk level is medium or low.** If your risk is high or above, masks are indicated for worship and the bishop's previous recommendations remain in place.
2. Communion in both kinds continues. Parishes may choose to distribute wine via a communion station with individual portions poured from a common vessel, or at the rail with clergy or a Eucharistic Minister intincting for everyone, or a combination of both, with the caveat that the minimum number of people necessary perform the intinction in an efficient manner. Smaller churches may wish to opt for a single member of the clergy or a single EM performing the intinction for all. Larger churches that use multiple communion stations should take care to use the minimum number of people necessary to complete the task efficiently. **Drinking directly from the chalice or self-intinction is not allowed at this time.** In this transition time, we still wish to minimize the number of people breathing in close quarters over the chalice. Gloves may be used by those performing the intinction, if so desired, but is not required provided the altar party is intentional about hand sanitation.
3. The larger radius of spread from congregational singing and musical instruments remains a concern until the positive test rate in your area is 3% or less. We recommend using the [COVID ActNow site](#) as the easiest way to quickly obtain this information. ([Read here](#) for why the 3% positivity rate is widely being used as a benchmark to signal decreased spread: ) **We strongly recommend continuing to wear masks while singing until the positive test rate is 3% or below.**
4. Masks are optional for outside-of-worship activities but each congregation should consider how their available spaces should be used to create the "most inclusive option" for meetings and activities. Ventilation in smaller spaces should ideally provide at least 3 air exchanges per hour.
5. If your local risk is medium or low, masks are optional for Sunday School and youth activities, provided there is adequate ventilation. Individual parishes may choose a more restrictive option if they are limited to small spaces.
6. Keep in mind the basic truisms that have gotten us this far in the pandemic--outside is safer than inside, larger spaces are safer than smaller ones, etc. Parishes should be intentional in creating the most inclusive option for all, so the immunocompromised do not feel excluded or isolated. Pandemic Task Force members continue to be available to help you work through the best plan for your congregation.