



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

1210 Locust Street | St. Louis, MO 63103 | 314-231-1220 | diocesemo.org

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

December 27, 2021

The Feast of St. Stephen, Deacon & Martyr

Dear Siblings in Christ,

We are all tired. We are all weary. We are all worn.

This has been a difficult journey in many ways during this time of the pandemic. We have glimpsed hope with the advent of vaccines, and we have borne witness to the despair as wave upon wave of illness has affected our communities. Through all the uncertainty, we have together faced the unknown with a tremendous amount of grace. We have continued to be the Good News of Jesus Christ and to, "love and serve the Lord" in new and innovative ways.

At this time, with the rapid rise of the Omicron variant of the COVID 19 virus, we are once again being asked to exercise a grace-filled love for one another and ourselves. We know that this latest variant is highly contagious and has a higher incidence of "break-through" infection among those who are fully vaccinated.

Effective January 3, 2022, the following guidelines and recommendations become effective in The Diocese of Missouri to further enable the safety and security of our siblings in Christ, the people we have been called to serve.

- Masks that cover the nose and mouth are required for all persons for all indoor gatherings. KN95 Masks are strongly recommended and encouraged.
- Physical distancing of 3'-6' is required for all indoor gatherings. Cohorts or pods within the same family may continue to safely interact.
- Distribution of the consecrated wine is suspended.
- Worship capacity is limited to the percentage of maximum occupancy that safely allows for physical distancing.
- Contact tracing is required for all building activities including worship and outreach projects.
- Registration to attend worship is strongly encouraged.
- Worship services should be limited to under an hour.
- Communal meals are strongly discouraged. Coffee-hour should be done as a to-go or the room should be set up to allow maximum physical distancing.
- Annual Parish Meetings should be conducted with physical distance or done via videoconference.

Continued over.



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While I know that this is in many ways a step backward, I am mindful of the danger posed by the rise of this new variant and the vulnerability of those whom we have been called to serve. I hope that we can continue to answer Christ's call to love God, love our neighbors, and love ourselves during this difficult and challenging time.

Know that you are in my prayers and I ask yours as well.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Deon K. Johnson", with a small cross symbol to the left.

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