



April 30, 2021

Dear Friends,

Warmest greetings this Eastertide. Mercifully, we continue to make good progress with rolling out the vaccine and lowering COVID-19 infections across the Commonwealth, with a few notable exceptions. You have played an important role in this success and I am thankful for your leadership and perseverance.

The CDC is offering revised recommendations with increasing knowledge and a changing landscape. Considering this progress, I want to afford you as much flexibility as possible to lead your people out of Covid without putting you under undue pressure. It seems right that each rector (interim or priest-in-charge) and vestry or bishop's committee decides their own level of comfort and risk tolerance and determines what is best for your community. As ever, the Diocesan team is here to support you.

Although the COVID-19 virus still poses significant health risks, especially to those with pre-existing health conditions, those with a compromised immune system, the elderly and those with respiratory issues, we can move forward. When in doubt, encourage your members to heed the advice of their medical professionals! These suggestions represent a range of options to safeguard against COVID-19 in our faith communities and I hope that they will help you navigate your way forward.

I have found the following CDC guidelines to be very helpful resources:

[CDC Recommendations for Gatherings](#) updated April 21, 2021.
[CDC Recommendations for Communities of Faith](#) updated February 19, 2021
[CDC Events Planning Tool](#) updated April 21, 2021

And this new graphic gives a wonderful summary of risks for individuals: [CDC Guideline Graphic](#) updated April 28, 2021

Specifically, for us in the Diocese of Lexington, we will:

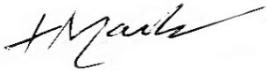
1. Keep to the following county-based infection percentages when meeting indoors (masks required): Red - ten or less; Orange - 30% of building capacity with physical distancing; Yellow - 60% of building capacity with physical distancing; Green - 100% of building capacity
2. BCP and Bibles can again be placed in pews
3. Groups may meet in our buildings using these same guidelines
4. Pastoral visits may resume when visitors are vaccinated, and masks worn by all
5. Sharing from a common cup and intinction is not safely possible, but individual cups for Holy Communion may be used under the rubric of special circumstances, but only for a time certain, to be determined by the bishop. At the end of this time, individual cups will no longer be permitted. Here are some ideas to consider from a paper presented from England: [Communion With Individual Cups](#)

6. Modified individual food service and coffee times are possible, but buffet lines may not yet be resumed
7. Choirs may resume rehearsing indoors with adequate spacing. It is highly recommended that all members are vaccinated. Non-vaccinated members must keep greater distances. The number of members singing in choirs may increase with adequate distance provided. Congregational singing is permitted outdoors; indoor congregational singing presents a higher risk, especially if some of the congregation has not yet been vaccinated; adequate ventilation is a key factor in assessing risks from singing: [Risk of Singing vs Speaking Study](#)

As more members receive vaccinations, risk of gathering in-person is reduced considerably. However, as a Church that welcomes all, we cannot be certain that everyone will be vaccinated and must take due care for the least of those among us.

I pray that as you begin to expand in-person gatherings, your encounters will grow enthusiasm and strengthen faith so that we can truly Be the Church and Be the Change.

May God lead you forward in wisdom and truth,



The Rt. Rev. Mark Van Koevering
Bishop of Lexington

Per The Episcopal Church Canon III.12.3(b) Bishop Mark asks that all Clergy and Wardens in Charge share this Pastoral Letter with their faith communities.



BE THE CHURCH
BE THE CHANGE