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Diocese of Oregon COVID-19 Guidelines Update

August 25, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is the end of August 2021 and we find ourselves continuing to fight COVID-19, with cases and hospitalizations on the rise, again. Oregon is tracking around 2,500+ new confirmed and presumptive cases a day ([source](#)), 93% of hospital beds, and 94% of ICU beds are at full capacity ([source](#)), and almost all of the cases are reported as the Delta variant (see [Daily Updates](#)). It is disheartening that we are not where we hoped we would be when we released the guidelines for reopening our parishes and missions.

At the end of July, we released a [statement to the diocese](#) clarifying that state or local government directives would override our diocesan guidelines. The very next day, Governor Kate Brown announced a [statewide mask mandate](#), requiring masks for indoor spaces. And earlier this week, Governor Kate Brown announced another [statewide mask mandate for outdoor gatherings](#) stipulating that, effective Friday, August 27, masks are required outdoors when distances between households cannot be kept. This mandate to wear masks, regardless of vaccination status, has prompted related concerns in our congregations regarding a return to stricter protocols for worship and fellowship.

The following updated guidelines are intended to help our congregations to be proactive. I understand that these guidelines will be discouraging for some, however, taking a more conservative approach now will help stop the spread of this virus and its variants.

- Wear a mask over your nose and mouth, regardless of your vaccination status.
 - o **Masks are required for indoor gatherings, and beginning August 27, masks are required for outdoor gatherings where distance cannot be kept between households.**
 - o Continue to provide masks to visitors and members who arrive without one.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and often. Continue to provide hand sanitizer to visitors and staff throughout your building.
- Reduce the number of individuals gathering for in-person worship or consider online services.
 - o The safe number for in-person worship will vary depending on the size of each congregation's worship space.
 - o Assess your worship space (if you haven't done so already) and calculate how many individuals can gather to maintain a safe distance between family units. For many, it may be as simple as revisiting your plans from earlier in the pandemic.



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- Clergy should wear a mask while preaching and celebrating the Eucharist. Lectors, cantors, and all participants in liturgy should be masked.
- Congregational singing is not advised. However, if your congregation does choose to sing, all should remain masked. **Cantors, soloists, and choirs should be masked and maintain distance** from each other and the congregation.
- **Communion should be received in one kind only.** Clergy should remind congregations that receiving Communion in one kind constitutes full Communion.
 - o Clergy and Eucharistic ministers should consider bringing the Host to each person individually and family unit rather than inviting people up to an altar rail. This allows for all to remain distanced rather than crowding near the altar or in a line.
- Exchanging The Peace should be done from a distance rather than in the form of a hug or handshake.
- All indoor fellowship activities (coffee hour, bible study, Sunday School, etc.) should be **moved outdoors, eliminated, or moved online.**
 - o If these activities do remain indoors, individuals should be masked and maintain a safe distance from others, regardless of vaccination status.
 - o If moved outdoors, individuals also should remain masked unless proper distance is provided between households.
 - o External programs should adhere to local and state mandates with regards to masks.
- If you learn you have been exposed to COVID-19, you should **get tested**. Tests are free and easily available, find the closest testing center to you [here](#).
 - o If someone on your staff tests positive for COVID-19 they should isolate at home; everyone on staff should be tested, wear masks and isolate until receiving a negative result.
- **Get vaccinated and encourage others to get vaccinated.** Find your closest vaccination location [here](#). Vaccinations are safe and effective.
 - o The FDA authorized the COVID-19 [Pfizer vaccine](#), and will shortly approve the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines soon.

The virus and its variants continue to evolve, and we need to continue to adapt and adjust. Please continue to pray for our world, our nation, and our health care professionals. Pray for loved ones and strangers alike. We are all created in God's image; be kind to one another, including yourselves.

Stay safe. And wash your hands.

Blessings,
+Diana