



11800 S Military Lane | Portland, Oregon | 97219
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www.diocese-oregon.org

January 28, 2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

Over the last few weeks, we have seen record COVID-19 case numbers across the country and in Oregon. The Omicron variant has spread through our communities at such a rapid rate that it has overwhelmed our hospitals and clinics, made it difficult to get appointments for Covid test, and prolonged the stress in our daily lives, again. Although the Omicron variant appears to be mild for those who are vaccinated and boosted, it is still a serious risk for those who are not vaccinated (including children under the age of 5), are immuno-compromised, and have high-risk or other health issues causing them to be more vulnerable.

The context of each congregation in the Episcopal Church in Western Oregon is different, and therefore decisions about in-person gathering vs. online gathering should be made by the clergy, vestry, and leaders of each congregation. The guidelines for this diocese (below) remain unchanged. Any changes issued by the Governor will override the diocesan guidelines. Wearing an N95, or KN95 mask, rather than a cloth mask, provides the most protection for you and your neighbor. If you have access to N95 or KN95 masks, please wear them.

It is important we continue to protect ourselves, our families, and our communities from COVID-19 and its variants. This virus has shaped our reality for 2 years and it appears it will remain as part of our reality for a while. We are all tired, but we should not give up. If you have not gotten vaccinated or received your booster, please do so.

Please hold our healthcare workers, teachers, and all who are at high risk or high exposure in your prayers.

COVID-19 Guidelines for the Diocese of Oregon:

- Wear a mask over your nose and mouth, regardless of your vaccination status.
 - **Masks are required for indoor gatherings, and since August 27, masks are required for outdoor gatherings where distance cannot be kept between households.**
 - 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.
 - The safe number for in-person worship will vary depending on the size of each congregation's worship space.
 - 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.
- Clergy may wear a mask while preaching and celebrating the Eucharist. Lectors, cantors, and all participants in liturgy should be masked.



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- 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 may be distributed in one kind***. Clergy should remind congregations that receiving Communion in one kind constitutes full Communion.
 - 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.
 - *If the congregation is fully vaccinated and physical distance between households are kept, they may resume using the common cup.
- 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**.
 - If these activities do remain indoors, individuals should be masked and maintain a safe distance from others, regardless of vaccination status.
 - If moved outdoors, individuals also should remain masked unless proper distance is provided between households.
 - 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](#).
 - You can order 4 free at-home COVID-19 tests through the government to be shipped to your house [here](#).
 - 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. Vaccines are now required for all active clergy in the Diocese of Oregon.** Find your closest vaccination location [here](#). Vaccinations are safe and effective.
 - If a booster shot is available for you, please schedule one according to the CDC recommendations and guidelines.

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,



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