

The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina

Revised Guidelines for Worship and Gatherings in Time of Pandemic

August 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

After five months of pandemic restrictions, we have all come to know things we didn't know we needed to know, and to practice new habits to protect our health and well-being. We've begun to understand more fully how best to worship, learn, serve and connect when we can't be physically together. What has been a fluid situation, in which the novel coronavirus increases in one place and decreases in another place, continues to be fluid. We are alternately tempted to be fearful or complacent, and have thereby stuttered our way into new and regularizing community rhythms.

These updated guidelines for gathering during the COVID-19 pandemic provide added flexibility and continued persistence in maintaining standards of safety during this public health crisis. Plans no longer need to be approved, but they do need to be reported, including when changes in practice are made. At any time, clergy may contact the Diocesan office to confer about questions or dilemmas.

In all things, our love for one another and care for one another's safety remains paramount. And, it is worth remaining mindful that this unique moment in world history has much to teach us about faith, hope, and love. Love, in Whom we abide, and the greatest of these three, will indeed teach us more than we can ask or imagine.

Peace in Christ,
 *Andrew Waldo

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Health Indicators

SCDHEC Percentage of Positive Tests per number tested

These Guidelines use the percentage of positive tests per number of persons tested as listed on the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. Though there are local variations in that percentage, the Diocese of Upper South Carolina bases its guidelines on the statewide average, due to the dynamic nature of disease transmission.

Until the 14- and 28-day average percentage of positive tests per number of persons tested reaches 5%, assume that indoor worship capacities will range from 10-20% of legal capacity, depending a) on number of public worship space exits and ability to ventilate the space:

# of Public Exits	Ventilation	% of Legal Capacity
3+	- HVAC with 3+ air exchanges/hour, <i>or</i> - Windows/doors open to outdoors throughout liturgy	20%
2	- HVAC with 3+ air exchanges/hour, <i>or</i> - Windows/doors open to outdoors throughout liturgy	15%
1	- HVAC with 3+ air exchanges/hour, <i>or</i> - Windows/doors to open to outdoors throughout liturgy	12%
1	- Limited air exchange ability, <i>or</i> - Inability of windows to open to outdoors during liturgy Windows open to outdoor	10%

For tracking purposes, we ask congregations to verify the above by sending a scan of your legal capacity certificate, plus a listing of public exits (exits through sacristies don't count), and a description of your ability to ventilate.

Distancing and mask-wearing principles, described below, are assumed in the above calculations.

For each average infection rate percentage point decrease of .5% achieved in SC *below* 5%, the % of Legal Capacity for indoor worship will increase by 10%. This does not add up to a full 100% of capacity upon reaching 0% infection in all situations listed above. Any differences will be made up at the .5-0% average infection rate.

Anyone known to have become infected with COVID-19 with mild to moderate symptoms will refrain from attending or participating in either indoor or outdoor *in-person* worship for 10 days after symptom onset. Infected persons with severe symptoms will refrain from attending or participating in either indoor or outdoor in-person worship for 20 days from symptom onset.



Principles for Worship

Recorded Services

Recorded and live-streamed services have proven such a benefit to nearly all our congregations and remain an appropriate substitute. We encourage congregations to continue and improve on the practice on a permanent basis.

Indoor

Preparing the Space during the Pandemic

Ventilate all indoor worship spaces (whether a consecrated sanctuary or other space) for up to 2 hours prior to liturgy, regardless of anticipated capacity.

Sanitize all seating and appurtenances before and after the liturgy

Carefully plan how congregants will arrive/depart and maintain a covenant of behavior norms for participation, including distancing and masks. ***Those unwilling to abide by these covenantal standards may not participate.***

Hand sanitizer is to be made available at all doorways and all participants expected to use it upon arrival and departure.

Distancing and Masks

Physical distancing 6-10' and the wearing of masks will be *required* for all present in all congregations for indoor, in-person worship as long as they are even recommended by public health officials, according to the following guidelines:

<i>Clergy</i>	Masked at all times, especially during Eucharistic Prayer—to avoid droplets on the bread—but exceptions possible when Officiating at the Office and at least 15' of distance can be maintained. Otherwise, masked throughout.
<i>Musicians/Singing</i>	Reduced numbers; masked and maintain 10' or more distance. Though complicated, we recommend restricting congregational singing until the rate of infection reaches 2%, and beginning with 10' or more distancing. In all cases, the safety of music and singing relies on universal mask-wearing (including wearing the mask properly with a good fit over the nose and mouth), and distancing. Masks must therefore be worn by all <i>while singing</i> , indoors or outdoors. This applies to musicians, congregation, and clergy.
<i>Lay leaders</i>	Masked and maintain 6' distance
<i>Attendees</i>	Masked and maintain 6' distance; persons in same household may sit together, distanced 10' from others
<i>Altar Guild</i>	Masked and maintain 6' distance; 1 person in sacristy at a time until 2% average infection rate reached

Safety Planning for arrivals/departures

Carefully plan how congregants will arrive/depart and maintain a covenant of behavior norms for participation, including distancing and masks. In a Zoom session with the Episcopal House of Bishops on 10 August, Dr. Anthony Fauci specifically noted how critical it is to manage arrivals and departures, whether indoors or outdoors.

The Liturgy

Eucharist in one kind with no direct administration of the sacrament until further notice. Distancing and masks, as above.

Asperges not permitted.

Morning Prayer. Distancing and masks, as above.

Printed, one-use service bulletins, with disposal receptacles. Return to BCPs and Hymnals TBD.

Consider having more than one service on a Sunday, with attendees being able to sign up. We recommend rotating who attends so that all who want to attend an in-person service have the opportunity. We especially recommend rotating eucharistic attendance if you only have one service per Sunday, so that every communicant has that opportunity to receive.

Outdoor

Capacities during Pandemic

Outdoor services provide the opportunity for significantly increased participation in in-person worship. Restriction in numbers is dependent a) on available space with distancing, b) an effective and maintained arrival and departure process with distancing, and c) the weather(!)

Preparing the Space

Mark spaces on ground. Prepare and assign ushers for orderly and distanced arrival and departure.

If celebrating Eucharist, prepare how congregants will approach to receive and return to seats, with distancing.

Consider asking parishioners to bring their own seating, having some seating cleaned and ready for guests or those who haven't brought their own.

Maintain a covenant of behavior norms for participation, including distancing and masks. ***Those unwilling to abide by these covenantal standards may not participate.***

Pre/Post-cleaning

Sanitize any provided seating and any worship appurtenances.

Distancing and Masks

Physical distancing 6-10' and the wearing of masks will be *required* for arrivals into and departures from the outdoor worship area for all present in all congregations as long as they are recommended by public health officials.

Masks may be removed while participants are at their assigned seating location. If celebrating Eucharist, congregants will re-mask before approaching to receive the sacrament and return to seats, maintaining distancing at all times.

The Liturgy

Eucharist in one kind with no direct administration of the sacrament until further notice. Distancing and masks, as above.

Morning Prayer. Distancing and masks, as above.

Printed, one-use service bulletins, with disposal receptacles. Return to BCPs and Hymnals TBD.

Safety Planning for arrivals/departures

Carefully plan how congregants will arrive/depart and maintain a covenant of behavior norms for participation, including distancing and masks. In a Zoom session with the Episcopal House of Bishops on 10 August, Dr. Anthony Fauci specifically noted how critical it is to manage arrivals and departures, whether indoors or outdoors.



Funerals

Indoor

Indoor preparation, movement, distancing and masking protocols and capacities noted above apply in all respects. When burial occurs at an indoor columbarium, distancing and mask protocols apply, with attendance capacity based on size of the indoor columbarium area. Minor adjustments in capacity are acceptable to accommodate single household groups. In the case of large families gathered from different geographic localities, provision should be made to allow for serial presence of family groups in the burial location.

Ventilation and sanitizing of the columbarium area should be as extensive as possible prior to the Committal.

The Liturgy

If a Eucharistic celebration, in one kind with no direct administration of the sacrament until further notice. Distancing and masks, as above.

If Burial Office only, distancing and masks, as above.

Commendation said by Celebrant/Officiant standing solo at urn or casket.

At Committal, the placing of dirt or sand on the urn of casket by family members should be organized to maintain distancing, except by same-household persons.

Printed, one-use service bulletins, with disposal receptacles. Return to BCPs and Hymnals TBD.

Outdoor

Outdoor preparation, movement, distancing and masking protocols and capacities noted above apply in all respects. When burial occurs at an outdoor columbarium or memorial garden, distancing and mask protocols apply, with provision capacity adjusted as needed relative to size of columbarium area. Adjustments in capacity are acceptable to accommodate single household groups. In the case of families gathered from different geographic localities, provision should always be made for the distancing and mask-wearing safety of family members, clergy and other worship leaders.

The Liturgy

If a Eucharistic celebration, in one kind with no direct administration of the sacrament until further notice. Distancing and masks, as above for outdoor liturgies.

If Burial Office only, distancing and masks, as above.

Commendation said by Celebrant/Officiant standing solo at urn or casket.

At Committal, the placing of dirt or sand on the urn of casket by family members should be organized to maintain distancing, except by same-household persons.

Printed, one-use service bulletins, with disposal receptacles. Return to BCPs and Hymnals TBD.

Anyone known to have become infected with COVID-19 with mild to moderate symptoms will refrain from attending or participating in either indoor or outdoor *in-person* worship for 10 days after symptom onset. Infected persons with severe symptoms will refrain from attending or participating in either indoor or outdoor *in-person* worship for 20 days from symptom onset.



Weddings

Indoor or Outdoor

Indoor or outdoor preparation, movement, distancing and masking protocols and capacities noted above apply in all respects. Adjustments in capacity are acceptable to accommodate single household groups. Attendants limited by ability to maintain distance, with masks. The couple being married may be unmasked throughout.

Priest must remain distanced, even during the Blessing of the Marriage.

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Baptisms

Indoor

Baptisms may be performed indoors or outdoors. However, outdoors is the safest option.

Adult

Indoor or outdoor preparation, movement, distancing and masking protocols and service capacities noted above apply in all respects.

Both the celebrant and the candidate will apply hand sanitizer immediately before and immediately after the imposition of water and anointing. The only point in the service where the six-foot requirement is not maintained is during the imposition of water and chrism – and only involves the celebrant and the candidate.

Every baptism will be conducted using fresh water. All containers to be used for baptismal water (pitcher, basin/bowl, smaller bowl or scoop) must be cleaned and sanitized prior to the baptism.

Preferred Vessels: The least hospitable common surface for the coronavirus is believed to be copper. Thus, the safest option is to use a copper bowl and a copper pitcher to hold the water for baptism. A smaller copper bowl can be used for scooping and applying the baptismal water to the candidate. Another small copper bowl can be used to hold the chrism prior to application.

As under the general guidelines, there is to be no general asperges using the baptismal water. Baptismal water should be disposed of in a respectful manner immediately after the service. No one other than the celebrant and the candidate should touch the water at any point.

Small Children & Infants

Given the additional risks involved with the baptism of small children and infants – especially to the extent that the child or infant needs to be held by someone else and/or the wearing of a mask by children under two years of age is not medically advised, parishes may, in dialogue with the parents of the candidates, delay such baptisms until we are a point where social distancing and masking requirements have been relaxed.

However, to the extent that parents of candidates desire to go forward with those baptisms, the Church should make every effort to proceed with those baptisms in a manner that reduces risk of infection to all involved. Thus, the same protocol for Adult Baptisms would be used for Baptisms of Small Children & Infants with the following caveats:

Holding of the Infant or Small Child to Be Limited to Parents or others in the Household of the Infant or Small Child

To the extent that the godparents/sponsors and the celebrant are not in the household of the infant or small child, they will not hold the infant or small child during the baptismal service. Thus, one parent or other

household member should be identified to bring the child to the font and hold the child during the imposition of water and chrism.

Masking Not Advised for Children Under Two Years Old

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends against the use of masks in children under two years of age given the risk of suffocation. Thus, since the wearing of a mask is primarily for the protection of others – not the individual wearing the mask – and the only non-household member who will come within six feet of the infant or small child during the service is the Celebrant, any priest asked to proceed with the baptism of someone under the age of two may decide that their own personal risk factors (age or underlying health conditions) warrant further delay—or may seek the assistance of another priest who is not subject to the same risk factors.

Distancing guidelines do apply to godparents who are not household members.

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Confirmation, Reception, Reaffirmation

Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation for all candidates, regardless of age, remains on hold until the average rate of infection percentage decreases below 5%. When that time arrives, they will be held regionally or convocationally in spaces befitting the expected number of candidates, and may include limits on numbers of guests permitted.

Anyone known to have become infected with COVID-19 with mild to moderate symptoms will refrain from attending or participating in either indoor or outdoor *in-person* worship for 10 days after symptom onset. Infected persons with severe symptoms will refrain from attending or participating in either indoor or outdoor *in-person* worship for 20 days from symptom onset.



Meetings/Study/Reflection Groups

Outside Groups

All indoor or outdoor preparation, movement, distancing and masking protocols and service capacities noted above apply in all respects, in reference to the size of the meeting space. Ventilation protocols are especially important in smaller spaces indoors.

Parish Groups

All indoor or outdoor preparation, movement, distancing and masking protocols and service capacities noted above apply in all respects, in reference to the size of the meeting space. Ventilation protocols are especially important in smaller spaces indoors.

Youth & Children

All indoor or outdoor preparation, movement, distancing and masking protocols and service capacities noted above apply in all respects, in reference to the size of the meeting space. Ventilation protocols are especially important in smaller spaces indoors.

Due to the fact that youth and children can be asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19, with the ability to transmit the disease to older family members and friends, parish youth gatherings must be well-planned, executed and supervised, including signed behavioral covenants. As with in-person worship, those not willing to abide by these covenantal standards may not participate.