



THE  
EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH<sup>®</sup>  
IN MISSISSIPPI

THE RT. REV. BRIAN R. SEAGE  
*Bishop*

May 14, 2021

Dear Friends,

Wow, what a long strange 16 months it's been! The pandemic is far from over but yesterday's news from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention signifies a milestone moment. It's difficult for me to describe how grateful I am for the amazing and creative ways you have practiced ministry throughout this time. Thank you for being the Body of Christ and sharing God's love in the midst of incredible challenge.

Yesterday, the CDC updated their guidelines to allow fully vaccinated people to **“resume activities without wearing masks or physically distancing.”**

Given this guidance, it is time to take next steps in returning to our life together. Some churches have already begun to take next steps. By as soon as your church is ready or by June 1, churches should implement the following guidelines:

- **Masking and social distancing are not required for fully vaccinated people.** This includes all activities, whether inside or outside, including singing, officiating, reading, preaching, leading Sunday School, etc.
- **The CDC still recommends that people that are not fully vaccinated wear masks** when gathering indoors, when singing indoors, or for crowded outdoor events.
- **Please note there are any number of reasons why someone might still mask or be unvaccinated. We must be conscious of the needs of all members of our church families.**
- **Consider how you can accommodate anyone with a compromised immune system who might prefer a separate seating area.**
- **Eucharist**
  - Communion will, for now, remain in one kind only.
  - Please be patient while I seek guidance and review research around the sharing of the common cup. You can expect further guidance on this very soon.

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- **Worship spaces and buildings**
  - If you have not already done so prayer books, hymnals, and Bibles should be returned to the nave and be available for use.
  - You may resume coffee hours, luncheons, small groups, Christian formation. You may also resume the use of spaces for groups such as recovery groups or other activities if you have not already done so.
  - Hand sanitizer should continue to be available and used appropriately, but the rigorous cleaning of surfaces is not necessary.
- **Vaccination status**
  - It is not necessary to show or display one's vaccination status. We will operate on an honor system.
  - As leaders in our communities, all clergy and lay leaders are encouraged to get vaccinated.
- **Other Considerations**
  - Churches should continue to offer options for online worship and gathering for those who are not yet ready to gather in person. Hybrid gatherings and virtual options will continue to be an important part of our ministries.

Thank you for your ministry,  
**+Brian**