



**The Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida
GENERAL COVID GUIDELINES
(Effective 5/23/21)**

1. All congregations should have their COVID-19 mask guidelines posted on the outside of all primary entry doors.
2. Revisions to the COVID-19 policy in individual congregations may be rolled out over a period of weeks instead of overnight. The “roll out” plan is up to the rector and vestry.
3. Revisions in the congregational COVID-19 policy should be announced and/or included in congregational bulletins.
4. Congregations using nametags may continue/return to nametag use.
5. Fully vaccinated persons (2 weeks must have lapsed since your final COVID-19 vaccination) do not have to wear masks indoors or outdoors at any time and no longer have to observe social distancing.
6. Unvaccinated persons will need to wear masks indoors and must continue to practice 6’ social distancing while masked at outdoor gatherings or events.
7. The data available at press time is inconclusive about whether those who have been infected can be exposed a second time or if they can still be a carrier and spread COVID-19 to others who are unvaccinated. For this reason, continued mask use is required for those unvaccinated and encouraged for the vaccinated when in large groups or during extended exposure longer than 15 minutes for the protection of others.
8. Churches should be especially sensitive to those at risk for COVID-19 exposure: infants and children, pregnant women, those who have cancer (or otherwise co-morbid patients), those undergoing chemotherapy, those immune compromised or with respiratory concerns, and the unvaccinated.

9. Churches should designate seating areas for persons who are not vaccinated and, if so doing, will need to keep one pew/row blocked off to maintain 6' social distancing. This seating section should be clearly marked.
10. There will be no enforcement policy established to determine who has been vaccinated and who has not been vaccinated. The honor system will be the norm across the diocese.
11. The offering/alms plates may be passed by ushers to those seated in the congregation.
12. Vaccinated persons may exchange the Peace with a handshake or embrace. Please be sensitive to the social cues given by those sitting around you. While you may be ready for a handshake or embrace, others may not. The Peace may be shared as people are comfortable. Please be courteous to those who wish to maintain physical distancing during the Peace. (Fist bumps and elbows are still appropriate.) During the exchange of the Peace, those who are unvaccinated should remain masked and observe 6' social distancing.
13. Some congregations are using color coded wrist bands (green, yellow, red) to determine individual willingness to exchange the Peace.
14. If the pre-intincted wafers or communion host wafers are in individual packages/sleeves, or if the unconsecrated wafers are in a closed ciborium (or bread box with a lid) and the lids are closed during the consecration, then the clergy may be unmasked for the Eucharistic Prayer. If the elements are not covered, the celebrant must be masked from the Sursum Corda through the ablutions.
15. The celebrant should wear gloves during the distribution of Holy Communion.
16. Any time there is a laying on of hands by clergy or laity, hand sanitizer should be readily available for use before and after the laying on of hands. When distributing communion to the altar party and to members of the congregation, the celebrant should be masked (as he/she will be exposed to some persons who are not masked during the distribution). The celebrant should still receive communion last immediately before the ablutions. Individuals may come to the altar rail (and kneel if desired) for communion, or the priest may take communion to individuals in the pews if desired.
17. LEMS/LEVS and assisting clergy who are distributing communion should be masked during the distribution.

18. There is no longer a need to take forehead temperatures (except in the nursery).
19. There is no longer a need to get contact information for social distancing purposes. This will be discontinued. Please keep your old written social distancing records for a minimum of 6 months.
20. There is no longer a need to wipe down or sanitize the pews/chairs between services.
21. Church nurseries, Sunday school classes for children and adults, church camps, and outings may resume at pre-COVID norms and schedules.
22. Church nurseries are encouraged to maintain forehead thermometer readings on the babies/children that are placed in the nursery. This information should be recorded on the sign-in sheet. Any children with a fever should not be permitted in the nursery. The nursery workers should be masked at all times.
23. Any persons with respiratory concerns, a compromised immune system, those given medical advice to be cautious in crowds, or persons who are coughing or sneezing should be encouraged to wear a mask for the safety of others (and to stay home and watch the livestream).
24. As a general rule, vaccination for COVID-19 is encouraged by the bishop UNLESS you have received professional medical advice against being vaccinated.
25. Food pantries may resume allowing clients to enter church-owned buildings for food distribution. Since the vaccination status of those coming into the buildings is unknown, food pantry volunteers should remain masked and observe 6' social distancing whenever possible.
26. Thrift shops may open and receive customers as they did during pre-COVID times. However, volunteers are to be masked since you may be exposed to unvaccinated persons.
27. Holy water fonts/lavabo at church entries are **not** to be used at this time.
28. If there is a new confirmed COVID-19 first-hand exposure—direct contact with the infected person, either symptomatic or asymptomatic—and you were in contact for 15 minutes or longer, or were in their presence in a confined area:
 - a) If you are vaccinated, you are at minimal risk and you will be at low risk to spread the COVID-19 virus. 4 days after exposure you should be tested to make sure that you are COVID-19 negative.

- b) If you are not vaccinated, you should be in self-quarantine for 2 weeks and should not return to normal activities until you have had a negative COVID-19 test result from a medical professional.
 - c) You should also notify Canon Holcombe (sholcombe@cfdiocese.org or 321-525-2366) ASAP and you will be guided as to your next steps.
 - d) You should notify worshippers by email blast or text blast to all in the church directory to inform them that there was a COVID-19 positive person in church on XX/XX date.
 - e) A thorough cleaning of the church is in order (not sanitizing), but church can still be held in the same location after 3 days.
- 29.Churches must continue to provide hand sanitizer and masks to the general public at worship, fellowship and service events.
- 30.The chalice will not be passed or used for intinction at any time (for public or home communion services).
- 31.Pre-intincted hosts or plain hosts may be offered to the congregation.
- 32.The only person to receive the communion chalice is the celebrant.
- 33.The priest must remain masked during the distribution of communion.
- 34.FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICE: Normal food and beverage service may resume to pre-COVID practices. Banquet and buffet service is permitted (common sense health recommendations and food safety precautions should be observed). For the next several months, disposable plates, cups and utensils are encouraged.
- 35.CHOIR: Fully vaccinated choir members may sing unmasked. 6' social distancing must be maintained for those who are not fully vaccinated. Vaccinations will be confirmed by choir master/organist as unvaccinated, unmasked persons pose the highest risk as spreaders.

New information coming out from the CDC about ventilation, air exchange, and aging HVAC systems and their role in COVID spread is alarming. There are several recommendations to consider:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/ventilation.html>

- a) Increase introduction of outside air and open outside air dampers beyond minimum settings.
- b) If possible, eliminate recirculating air (speak with your HVAC specialist).
- c) Open windows and doors whenever possible to increase air flow.

- d) Use fans to increase effectiveness of open windows. Point the fan to the outside.
- e) Change air filters monthly and keep records of who changed them and when the filters are to be changed.
- f) Rebalance/adjust HVAC systems to increase total airflow.
- g) Consider adding HEPA fan/filter systems or UVGI system. Speak with your HVAC specialist.

Each rector/priest in charge/vicar and vestry must decide their own level of comfort and risk tolerance. Within certain guidelines, Bishop Brewer wishes to allow the leadership in each church to determine what is best for them. The diocesan leadership does not want to be overly restrictive, nor laissez-faire in response to this pandemic. 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. Always encourage your members to heed the advice of their medical professionals. These protocols represent the minimum standards for our response to safeguarding against COVID-19 in our churches.

If you have any specific questions about COVID-19 cases, decisions for closure or guidance, please contact Canon Scott Holcombe at 321-525-2366, or email him at sholcombe@cfdiocese.org.