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Subject: Updated COVID Guidelines



# Episcopal Diocese of Albany

*Disciples Making Disciples*

## Updated COVID Guidelines

Dear Friends in Christ,

It has been a long 14 months since our COVID restrictions began. We thank you for your steadfastness in adhering to the Diocesan guidelines for safe worship during the pandemic. The changes in policy announced by the CDC and adopted by New York State are welcome signs of how far we have come. The efforts of doctors and scientists have led to effective vaccines and treatments. We give thanks to our Lord for these amazing medical miracles. As more and more people are able to receive vaccines many of us welcome the opportunity to resume the activities that we have missed. We all cherish the thought that mask wearing every time we leave the house could soon be a thing of the past.

We are also keenly aware that many of our friends and fellow parishioners are members of the most vulnerable populations. While we are excited for a return to a sense of normalcy, we must remain committed to caring about our fellow sisters and brothers in Christ. There continue to be those among us who are not fully vaccinated – for some that day may never come. We have among us those with compromised immune systems for whom the vaccine may not be enough to fully protect them. We encourage everyone to remain sensitive to their circumstances, and to take account of the appropriateness of additional vigilance and precautions around them. Finally, we must acknowledge that while the governor has announced the adoption of the CDC guidelines for mask wearing, the specific guidance for churches has yet to be updated.

The Standing Committee has met and considered all of these factors and releases the following updated Guidelines as a **minimum standard** for the Diocese of Albany. Clergy are **authorized to continue to have policies that are stricter to protect their congregations and local communities**.

You are asked to read the entire guidelines for details, but highlighted changes are:

Masks will be allowed to be removed while in pews if 6 ft. distance can be maintained, except while singing unless a 12 ft. distance can be maintained.

Coffee hour type gatherings are authorized while following safety precautions

We understand that many of us would like to see further reduction of restrictions and some would like to continue with restrictions as they currently stand. We feel these adjustments acknowledge the significant progress that has been made while respecting that the pandemic is not over. We will continue to monitor the state guidance and will further modify the guidelines as appropriate.

Over the last few weeks in our Gospel readings from John, we have heard Jesus pray two things for us his followers: that “all may be one,” and that we “love one another.” May we continue to work together, moving forward into the future as one in our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for praying for us as we continue to pray for you.

In Christ,  
The Standing Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany.

[UPDATED GUIDELINES \(PDF\)](#)

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