



From the Bishop

The Right Reverend Cathleen Chittenden Bascom
Tenth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas

October 8, 2021

Dearly Beloved of the Diocese of Kansas:

When I issued guidelines in response to the Delta variant surge -- including masking for indoor gatherings across the diocese -- I promised to revise guidelines October 1. I apologize for the week delay but wanted to gain the perspective of our clergy at the recent Gathering of Clergy and of our Council of Deans.

Find the new guidelines below along with an explanation of our color coding newly aligned with CDC format (example found at the end of this message.)

As often during the pandemic, my restrictions place parameters and if an item/practice is not specifically addressed, I ask clergy and lay leadership to make the best decision for your congregation in light of realities in your community context.

Summary of mask guidance October 8th forward:

- High Transmission (RED): Masks are **required** for all in public, indoor settings. While a vast majority of Episcopalians in Kansas are vaccinated, we do this out of love of our health professionals, children, and the most vulnerable; it is a precaution so that we do not carry the virus to others. New cases are down 28% in the last fortnight, but the United States has surpassed 700,000 dead from this virus. Our love of God and love of neighbor needs to compel our practice to keep numbers on a downward trajectory while we grieve the incredible loss of life.
- Substantial Transmission (ORANGE): Mask wearing is **encouraged** for all in public, indoor settings, however local clergy in conversation with their vestries may decide.
- Moderate and Low Transmission (YELLOW & BLUE): only unvaccinated people are asked to wear a mask in public, indoor settings. Vaccination continues to be the best way we have to love our neighbor during this pandemic. Please get vaccinated and encourage your family and friends to do the same.

Guided in conversation with health advisors, we are loosening two previous restrictions:

- The diocese is no longer requiring tracked attendance or registration at worship and other parish events. Parish leadership may continue this practice if they desire.
- Drinking from the common cup is still restricted but these are safe options for communion:
 - in one-kind (bread only)
 - intinction done by the Eucharistic minister and dropped into hands
 - use of small communion cups filled with wine that is blessed at the altar

Explanation of slightly revised color-coding from Canon Patrick:

Community Transmission Levels	Low Transmission	Moderate Transmission	Substantial Transmission	High Transmission
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days	0-9.99	10-49.99	50-99.99	≥100
Percentage of NAATs that are positive during the past 7 days	0-4.99%	5-7.99%	8-9.99%	≥10.0%

Based on feedback from clergy and medical advisors, we will be updating our [EDOK COVID Tracker](#) colors to be in line with how the CDC codes. From the CDC's [description of how they determine community transmission](#):

CDC looks at two numbers — total new cases and percent positivity — to determine the level of community transmission.

- **Total new cases** refers to a county's rate of new COVID-19 infections, reported over the past 7 days, per every 100,000 residents.
- **Percent positivity** refers to the percentage of positive COVID-19 tests in a county over the past 7 days.

A higher number of total new cases and a higher percent positivity correspond with a higher level of community transmission, as shown above. If the values for each of these two metrics differ (for example, if one indicates moderate and the other low), then the higher of the two should be used to make decisions about mask use in a county.

I give thanks for your witness in our communities and your love of one another,

Every blessing,

The Right Reverend Cathleen Bascom
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