

Salem Presbytery COVID-19 Re-Entry Task Force Update (9 August 2022):

While we all wish this were not the case, COVID-19 is still very much with us; community transmission of the highly infectious Omicron BA.5 variant remains of concern throughout Salem Presbytery. Your COVID-19 Re-Entry Task Force has as its principal goal — that of keeping one another well as we gather together. Going forward, efforts to manage COVID-19 infection in our church communities should focus on encouraging each one of us to engage the better angel of our nature and operate from a position of care and respect for one another.

To that end, we strongly encourage the following:

- Use of highly effective masks (i.e., N-95/KN-95 or KF-94) when gathering with others, especially if you are at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19, are unvaccinated or live or routinely interact with someone who is at high risk or unvaccinated.
- Remain mindful of spacing and ventilation concerns when planning and attending events where people may be eating or drinking; consider using outdoor options whenever and where possible.
- As we move into fall and a return to more normal work and school schedules, remain up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters to decrease the risk of severe illness; when available later this fall, obtain the booster containing Omicron specific protection.
- Obtain an influenza vaccination to prevent illness from another viral respiratory risk.
- If experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, get tested and follow your medical provider's advice regarding limiting your exposure to others, including specific guidance about masking and repeat testing to come out of isolation.
- Much like regularly reviewing weather forecasts, routinely review the current data for your county on the CDC website found at this link: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>; supplement this review by exploring current data resources on the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services dashboard found here: <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard>. Both resources can help you decide how to manage infection risk.

For further exploration of the Omicron BA.5 wave including guidance about how to respond to it, we recommend reading the following newsletter:

<https://yourlocalepidemiologist.substack.com/p/ba5-is-here-time-to-ride-the-wave>.