



The Diocese of Southeast Florida

GENERAL COVID-19 GUIDELINES

Effective July 1, 2021

Dear Clergy and Congregational Regathering Teams,

Throughout this year we have worked together to offer the best possible guidance and resources to support our congregations, schools, and special ministries in the face of the pandemic. We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to all the Parish Re-gathering Teams. The seriousness with which you set yourself to the task of keeping the members of your congregation and communities safe was striking. We would also like to offer our deepest gratitude to Dr. Ron Helms, who for the last 14 months has worked tirelessly on our behalf to help chart a way forward, mining complex data to assist in our decision-making process. During these last few months, we have moved forward into a new period of encouraging vaccination and community awareness and because of this forward movement we present this letter as our final letter of recommendations and resources.

It is with great thought and prayer that the Diocesan Regathering Team, in consultation with Bishop Eaton, has determined that, following the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we will continue to encourage all persons to be vaccinated and recommend that masks be worn by those who have not been vaccinated. Please remember that full effectiveness of vaccination takes two weeks after the second or final dose. As more persons become fully vaccinated, the CDC continues to update the public with new information and guidelines. These guidelines have shaped the revisions to our Diocesan COVID-19 protocols outlined in this document.

With the following two exceptions each congregation in consultation with their Re-gathering Teams may decide their own level of comfort and risk tolerance.

1. The Greeting of the Peace is extended from where you are standing in your pew. Members of family groups sitting together may extend a physical Greeting of the Peace.
2. Holy Communion will continue to be administered in One Kind (Bread only).

The Chalice is reserved for the Celebrant alone. The Chalice is not to be offered to any member of the congregation, LEMs, or other clergy, in any form.

Individual so-called "communion cups" are not authorized for use in this diocese, and the practice of intinction is not permitted.

It is still a good idea regularly to disinfect or sanitize frequently touched objects: doorknobs, light switches, handles, pew ends, tables, countertops, desks, phones, computers, musical instruments, and restroom facilities, including toilets, flushing handles, faucets, and sinks.

These guidelines are presented in the expectation that clergy leadership and vestries will decide their own level of comfort and risk tolerance. Due to the extensive geographical and demographic diversity of our diocese, there will continue to be varying statistical data across counties, deaneries, cities, and communities as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the leadership of each community will need to give regular consideration as to how the virus is spreading within your particular community, the positivity rate of your area, and what is necessary and best to ensure the safety of your churches, schools, and special ministries. Consequently, because of these differences, our diocesan leadership does not want to be too prescriptive in response to the pandemic. However, the pandemic is still ongoing and unpredictable. COVID remains a serious threat to many in our region, and we are now seeing the emergence of highly infectious variants that can be caught and spread by the vaccinated. So, vigilance and caution remain crucial.

Local leadership is free to have stricter policies than these but may not have more lenient policies than these. The Bishop's Office will support stricter policies in specific cases where the local community may need to implement them.

We know that in following the guidance of the CDC and in keeping the safety and wellbeing of our parishioners, students, and all those who use our facilities foremost in our concern, we can now determine our own practices at a local level.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>– CDC

<https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/06/21/world/covid-vaccine-coronavirus-mask>– NYT

<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>– Johns Hopkins

The Diocesan Regathering Team