



From the Bishop

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

Jan. 5, 2021

Dear Beloved in the Diocese of Kansas:

I write to you on the eve of the Epiphany, that feast of the church year that marks Jesus's manifestation beyond his Jewish community to all the people of the earth. It is a time marked by light, not only as days become longer but as we seek to follow Jesus as the light of the world.

Our faith likewise calls us to care for all people, and the guidelines for diocesan activities during the pandemic have been provided as a way to serve the health and safety of people outside our communities, as well as those within.

When I wrote to you in November, I indicated that a diocesanwide suspension of indoor activities would take place through Epiphany, and after that time, such activities would be governed on a county-by-county basis by the spread of the virus in each county, as measured by the statistics recommended to me by a group of medical advisors:

- a test positivity rate below 10 percent; and
- a case incidence rate of fewer than 100 per 100,000 people.

Color-coded COVID guide will be provided each week

From now through Palm Sunday, each week diocesan staff will gather statewide health data from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and post on the diocesan website a color-coded guide that indicates the severity of COVID in each Kansas county where we have a church.

Here is the link to the spreadsheet, which is updated every Wednesday afternoon:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1M4AdBvYp2qfoD-JAmrrRL1bhmZ6f1_vhy-6rjhpqkbQ/edit#gid=751252196

I am requiring clergy leaders to check the status of their county and church on this spreadsheet every week.

These are the three tiers and their meaning:

- **Yellow** (less than 10 percent test positivity and less than 100 per 100,000 incidence). Unless under a general diocesan moratorium, parishes can conduct indoor in-person worship and other events.
- **Orange** (greater than 10 percent test positivity or greater than 100 per 100,000 incidence). Local discernment; parishes can conduct indoor in-person worship and other events, but clergy and lay leaders must confer and discern if it is wise to do so in light of what they know their local context and culture.
- **Red** (greater than 10 percent test positivity and greater than 100 per 100,000 incidence). Indoor in-person worship and other events must be suspended for at least two weeks. Return to indoor in-person worship and events is allowed after two weeks if a parish enters the Orange status.

Some special notes:

- Annual Meetings will be under "local discernment" (treated like the orange tier.) During any in-person Annual Meeting, people need to keep 6-foot distance and wear masks, and there should be no food nor drink. For online or hybrid meetings, please refer to the attached special order that I am giving you permission to use. Parish Vestries may, by adding the parish name in the appropriate places, adopt these rules as soon as possible and include them in regular Annual Meeting announcements. If you desire to make substantive changes or

substitutions to these rules, please forward your proposal to the Rev. Patrick Funston, canon to the ordinary, for consideration and feedback: apfunston@episcopal-ks.org

- Whether to allow outside groups to meet in church buildings will be considered “local discernment” (like the orange tier).
- Scientists believe that the virus is more spread through the air than through surfaces. Thus, please refer to and follow good protocols around ventilation, duration and amplification, as outlined in my Nov. 12, 2020, statement (<https://episcopal-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/COVID-Advent-2020.pdf>). However, the cleaning of surfaces may not need to be as rigorous as thought early in the pandemic.

I know it can feel that the pandemic challenges we have faced in this diocese will never end. But as scientists have created effective vaccines in record time, we can see a light – a blessed light – at the end of a long, 10-month tunnel.

May the light of the Risen Christ be with you all!

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