



August 3, 2021

The Episcopal Diocese of Utah

The Rt. Rev. Scott B. Hayashi

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The highly contagious Delta Variant has been sweeping across the United States. The vast majority of newly infected people who have been hospitalized are those who have not been vaccinated. Those who have been vaccinated have been spared hospitalization for the most part. This is good news, however, the Delta Variant has infected some vaccinated people as well. All people who have been infected with the Delta Variant carry a heavy virus load and can easily spread the virus. Because of this, the CDC has revised its previously relaxed recommendations for people who have been vaccinated. All people, regardless of vaccination status, are now advised to practice social distancing, to wear masks when indoors in public places and to regularly wash hands.

The Utah and Arizona Legislatures and Governors have forbade mask mandates being imposed upon schools. When classes resume, the wearing of masks will be voluntary. Children under the age of twelve cannot yet receive the C-19 vaccine. Only 25% of youth between 12 - 15 have been fully vaccinated and only 37% of youth 16 - 17 are fully vaccinated. Experts warn that this does not bode well for us in Utah and Arizona.

We Episcopalians made a promise, a covenant, when we were baptized. Because we believe in God, we promised to “seek and serve Christ in all persons loving our neighbors as ourselves.” To this end, we are called dedicate ourselves to the safety and well being of all people. This includes doing all that we can to limit the spread of COVID 19.

What does this mean for us?

The protocols for in-person worship that I issued in May shall remain the same.

FOR OUTDOOR WORSHIP:

- People may gather without masks or social distancing. People should not, however, be packed tightly together.
- Masks shall be available for people who desire them.
- Congregational singing with masks is allowed.
- No physical greeting of clergy or fellow worshipers when the service concludes or in the Passing of the Peace.
- The use of the Common Cup for Communion is prohibited.
- Hand sanitizers shall be readily available for use.
- Coffee hour and receptions may be held outdoors.

FOR INDOOR WORSHIP:

- Worship attendance limited to the number of households your worship space can accommodate maintaining a six foot distance from others. Doors and windows should be open, weather permitting.
- Signs will be prominently displayed that people who are manifesting COVID-19. Symptoms should not enter the building.
- Hand sanitizer at entrance and in pews, used upon arrival
- Bulletins available on separate stand, perhaps with the Offering Plate (which will not be circulated or presented).
- Continued virtual Morning Prayer and other offerings.
- Practice health safety protocols — wearing masks, physical distancing.
- Sanitary masks will be worn by all persons when inside our buildings for worship.
- Strive to keep services no longer than 60 minutes.
- Congregational singing is allowed.
- Choir Members should be vaccinated and wear N95 or KN95 masks when performing.
- No physical Passing of the Peace or physical greeting of clergy or fellow worshipers when the service concludes..
- If Eucharist is to be celebrated, hygienic plans for distribution must be carefully thought through — the use of the Common Cup is prohibited.
- Coffee hour or receptions following the service shall be permitted if served outdoors.
- Clergy in charge and vestries/bishop’s committees are permitted to implement stricter measures.
- Churches are encouraged to livestream their services for those who are ill or uncomfortable with attending in person during this resurgent pandemic.

In addition to the above, I ask that all meetings, church and outside groups, that are held indoors at the church observe the CDC guidance regarding masks and social distancing.

I encourage all congregations to offer their locations as a site for vaccine clinics in order that we provide easy access to receive a COVID 19 vaccination.

Thank you for all that you have been doing and continue to do to keep yourselves and each other safe.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott B. Hayashi".

+Scott B. Hayashi
Bishop of The Episcopal Diocese of Utah