



MAY 21, 2021

The Episcopal Diocese of Utah

The Rt. Rev. Scott B. Hayashi

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

There is encouraging news regarding the pandemic. The rate of infection from COVID-19 is decreasing and the vaccines have proven effective in stopping serious infections from the virus and, so far, the variants.

In Utah, 30% of the people have been fully vaccinated and 43% have received at least one dose. Studies have also shown that people have been fully vaccinated can safely gather together with other fully vaccinated people.

This is significant progress against this dread virus. I rejoice in this.

From the beginning of the pandemic the first priority has been the safety of the clergy and people of our diocese and our larger community. The second priority has been the continuation of worship and outreach ministries in vastly different conditions than ever before.

All of our congregations and ministries have been diligent in their efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus and in adapting their ministry endeavors to provide worship, spiritual care and outreach to those in need.

I am grateful for the many ways that you all have carried on in mission and ministry during these past long months. I believe that we are getting closer to a time when we will be able to gather together much like we remember from before the pandemic.

We are getting closer, Yes!, and, we are not there yet. Children under the age of 12 cannot yet get the vaccine. We have a responsibility to continue our efforts to practice safe procedures that will help to ensure the safety of these most vulnerable and precious people.

What does this mean for us?

Research and studies have shown that outdoor events are much safer than indoor ones. One study showed that indoor events were almost 20 times more likely to spread the virus than outdoor events.

This, along with the reports from the CDC regarding fully vaccinated people, leads me to allow the following 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 other 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.

A month after COVID-19 vaccinations are made available to children 2-11 years of age the COVID-19 safety protocols shall be lifted as long as the CDC and local health authorities advise that it is reasonable to do so. The month wait is to allow the vaccination to gain effectiveness in the children. Because we know indoor worship means a greater responsibility to ensure the health and safety of those most vulnerable, Therefore, 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.

I urge all congregations to undertake efforts to encourage and assist people in getting an appointment to be vaccinated when they are eligible. This includes helping those without access to a computer, smartphone or tablet to make an appointment. In most cities, drug stores are offering vaccinations without appointments. Please note those stores and assist people in helping them get to those places and wait with them as they wait some time before they can go home.

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

Faithfully,

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