



## UPDATED GUIDANCE FOR IN-PERSON GATHERINGS FOR THE DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

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MAY 27, 2020

*"One bread, one body, one Lord of all, one cup of blessing which we bless.*

*And we, though many, throughout the earth, we are one body in this one Lord." -John B. Foley*

As followers of Jesus Christ, we gather at table to re-member, to be re-united as one, with our spiritual ancestors and to recall our Savior's life, death, and resurrection. For Episcopalians the Holy Eucharist is not simply a reenactment of an event long past, but a stepping out of time to be present in the Upper Room with Jesus and his disciples on the night before he died. The Holy Eucharist is therefore central to our understanding of who we are as Christ-followers.

Over the last few months, we have fasted from receiving the sacrament and have practiced spiritual communion with our sisters and brothers across the diocese and across the world. This time of pandemic has heightened the sense that we, "though many, throughout the earth, we are one body in this one Lord." Now, in this season of preparing for in-person worship in the Diocese of Missouri, we are mindful that Jesus offers himself to us and joins our lives to his even when we are not able to gather or to receive Holy Communion.

While COVID-19 continues to be a part of our lives, and until such a time as a vaccine is developed, the best way we can love our neighbors is to continue those practices that science tells us will keep us safe. The following guidelines are to allow for the safe distribution of Holy Communion, should your community of faith choose to celebrate the Eucharist at in-person gatherings after June 1, 2020.

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

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- **AT RISK MEMBERS:** Those older than 65 years old, with a compromised health conditions or caring for the sick in any way, are encouraged to refrain from in-person worship at this time.
- Anyone who is ill, has a temperature, cough, respiratory infection etc., should stay home as an act of justice to the whole community.
- **PHYSICAL DISTANCING:** Physical distancing is to be observed and signified by signs, tape, or other means. This includes both indoor and outdoor areas
- **NUMBER IN ATTENDANCE:** In-person worship offered indoors will be limited in attendance, depending on the guidelines set by public authorities (10% of total room capacity as of 5/26/2020)
- **CONGREGATIONAL SEATING:** Mindful of limitations and the physical layout of the church, seating should be clearly marked to allow for physical distancing (such as seating people in alternating pews with a 2-pew separation or seating in different sections for different Masses).
  - Those living in the same household may sit together without distancing.
- **FACE COVERINGS/MASKS:** Masks are to be worn by everyone, including the clergy, when approaching church and inside church (except for those under 2 years old per CDC guidelines).
- **COLLECTION:** Baskets or offering plates should not be passed from person to person.

- FONTS AND HOLY WATER RECEPTACLES: All containers for Holy Water should be drained and left empty at this time.
- MUSIC/SINGING: Music is considered an element of prayer and is therefore an important part of worship. Special attention should be paid to the use of singing during in-person worship.
  - Health experts indicate that singing produces 6-10x more droplets from our mouths than speaking. Keeping singing to a minimum is advised and the congregation should not remove their masks to sing.
  - If there is a "choir" present, it should be as small as possible with each member spaced about 10'-15' apart.
  - Instrumental music is encouraged along with the play of hymns with the recitation of the text by the congregation.

### GUIDANCE FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

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These guidelines are intended to aid in the safe distribution of Communion for in-person worship.

- At the start of liturgy, in printed bulletins, and again at the time of Communion, the priest should explain how Holy Communion will be distributed.
- During the Eucharistic Prayer, the Celebrant's mask may be removed, provided that the containers for the bread and wine remain covered (a pall or purificator may be used for this purpose).
- The distribution and consumption of the consecrated wine is suspended for clergy and laity. The chalice should be consecrated and reverently disposed of after the liturgy.
- The priest, deacon, or lay minister while distributing communion **must** wear a mask.
- The use of the altar rail for the distribution of communion is suspended.
  - Communion "stations" are encouraged with the clergy person or the Eucharistic Minister standing in a central location wearing a mask to distribute communion.
- The floors/aisles should be clearly marked at 6' intervals to ensure proper physical distancing.
- Maintaining a single-file is necessary for the distribution of Communion. Multiple Communion ministers may be used as long as one-way traffic patterns are observed.
- Communion is to be received in the hand only.
- When approaching to receive communion, the communicant should lower their mask below their chin in order to prepare to receive. The communicant immediately replaces their mask after consuming the bread.
- Those distributing communion must sanitize their hands immediately before and after distributing Communion, and when at all possible, should utilize a sanitizing solution (at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol) to sanitize their fingers when incidental contact is made with someone receiving communion.

## DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT PHYSICALLY PRESENT FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP.

*The Book of Common Prayer allows for the distribution of communion to those who are sick or to those who are unable to be present for the public celebration of the Holy Eucharist. During this time of pandemic the distribution of communion to members of the parish at home should be done as soon as possible following the celebration of the Holy Eucharist*

- The Consecrated bread may be delivered to those who are homebound provided that:
  - There is no physical contact
  - The bread has been individually wrapped/prepared with limited contact.
  - After participating in the online celebration of the Holy Eucharist.
  - By the clergy at any time following the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.
  - By Eucharistic visitors only on the day in which the Eucharist was celebrated.

- Along with the bread the following prayers are to be included:

*Before Receiving Communion*

Be present, be present, O Jesus, our great High Priest, as you were present with your disciples, and be known to us in the breaking of bread; who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

*After Receiving Communion*

O Lord Jesus Christ, who in a wonderful Sacrament has left unto us a memorial of your passion: Grant us, we pray, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of your Body and Blood, that we may ever perceive within ourselves the fruit of your redemption; who lives and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Please contact the Office of the Bishop with any questions.