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## COVID-19 Updates November 2021

COVID-19 transmission remains high in much of the United States, including in Pennsylvania. To keep yourselves, your loved ones, your communities, and your congregations safe and healthy this holiday season, please take the following precautions:

### 1. Get vaccinated!

- COVID-19 vaccines are available for those 5 years of age and older
- Some individuals are also eligible for boosters/additional doses
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html>
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/immuno.html>
- Vaccines are:
  - Safe
  - Effective at decreasing risk of COVID-infection, severe disease, and death
  - However, not 100% effective at preventing infection, which is why other preventive measures are needed to protect high-risk individuals, particularly when cases are high
- Clergy should get vaccinated and encourage congregants to do the same!

### 2. Masks

- Individuals 2 years and older should wear a covering over the nose and mouth indoors in public in areas where transmission is substantial or high, regardless of vaccination status
  - <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>
- Monitor transmission levels in your county, and wear masks during worship and at other church functions
- Masks decrease the spread of respiratory droplets to others and can also help protect the wearer
- Note: When planning church services, please remember that singing produces more respiratory droplets than speaking, thus increasing the risk of transmission

### 3. Physical distancing

- Maintain 6 feet distance from non-household members
- Avoid close contact with those who are sick
- Consider blocking off certain pews/seating to create space between individuals at church
- Find other ways to greet and show signs of affection- avoid passing the peace, hugs, and handshakes
- Consider individual portable communion cups when celebrating the Lord's Supper

### 4. Isolation and Quarantine

- Isolate from others and get tested if you have COVID-19 symptoms (even if you are fully vaccinated)
- Quarantine/test if exposed depending on vaccination status
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>
- Inform close contacts if you test positive
- Clergy should track attendance and seek guidance from local and/or state public health officials regarding exposures/positive cases

### 5. Cleaning and Disinfection

- Disinfect commonly touched surfaces
- Avoid sharing and passing objects
- Wash hands frequently
- Provide hand sanitizer during church services/events

As the holidays and cold and flu season approaches, it is important for us to remember that many in our congregations have underlying medical conditions that put them at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19, in addition to those that are still not yet eligible for vaccination (children under 5).