



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

1210 Locust Street | St. Louis, MO 63103 | 314-231-1220 | diocesemo.org

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

September 20, 2022

John Coleridge Patteson, Bishop, and his Companions, Martyrs, 1871

"Finally, beloved, rejoice. Be restored; encourage one another; agree with one another; live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you." 2 Corinthians 13:11

Dear Siblings in Christ,

At the heart of Christian Community stands love; love of God, love of neighbor, and love of self. We have all, over the last two years of the pandemic, expressed the qualities of love by refraining from gathering, fasting from communion, and adapting to new changing realities. This has been a time of deep graciousness and loving engagement. We have grieved that which has been lost all the while looking in hope towards God's renewed call to love.

We have seen the development of vaccines and effective treatments for the coronavirus, along with other medical advancements that have propelled us into an endemic. At this time, having consulted with the Diocesan Pandemic Taskforce, **effective October 1, 2022**, most restrictions pertaining to gatherings and the distribution of Holy Communion are lifted.

While masks are no longer required for worship and indoor gatherings, I encourage you to be mindful of those who choose to continue to wear masks. Our communities of faith are made up of diverse abilities, understandings, cultures, and traditions, and we seek to respect the dignity of every human being. I encourage you to carefully and prayerfully consider how best to offer Christ-centered hospitality, especially to those who are immunocompromised and unvaccinated within the community.

I am eternally grateful to the members of the Diocesan Pandemic Task Force for their dedication and diligence in helping us navigate this time. Know that you are in my prayers and I ask yours as well.

Yours in Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Deon K. Johnson
Eleventh Bishop of Missouri



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COMMON QUESTIONS

Q. Can we offer the common cup?

A. Yes. Scientific studies¹ have now shown that the risk of transmission of COVID-19 from the common cup is exceptionally low. The route of COVID-19 infection is respiratory; the common cup exposes the gastrointestinal system to the substances in/on the cup. Communion should be offered in both kinds. Communities of faith may choose to distribute wine via the common cup, or intinction by the clergy or Eucharistic minister. **Self-intinction is expressly forbidden within the Diocese of Missouri.**

Q. Should we continue the use of individual cups for distribution of the consecrated wine?

A. No. The use of individual containers for the distribution of the consecrated wine was an intermediate step towards restoration of the common cup. At this time, the use of individual cups for communion is be discontinued.

Q. Are masks required for worship?

R. No. The wearing of masks for worship is left up to the leadership of each community of faith. Particular care should be taken to ensure the safety and well-being of those who are immunocompromised and unvaccinated within communities of faith. The decision of anyone within the community to either wear or not wear a mask should be respected.

Q. Is contact tracing required?

A. No. At this time the need to pre-register for worship is not necessary. Individual communities of faith may choose to continue to practice as best suits their context and community.

Q. What happens if someone in our community tests positive for COVID-19?

A. According to the Centers for Disease Control, those who test positive for COVID-19 should stay home for at least 5 days and isolate from others. Notify the community of faith immediately about a positive case.

Q. Can we sing and perform music in church?

A. Yes. Singing and musical performances of all kinds are allowed in churches, including congregational singing, and choirs and worship groups can perform without limitations. Consideration should be given for those who are immunocompromised.

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7439816/>