



SAINT JAMES EPISCOPAL

An Important Worship Update from the Rector of St. James

June 15, 2021

Dear People of St. James:

Every two weeks I participate in a diocesan-wide clergy Zoom call. At these bi-weekly meetings, the bishop consults with the clergy regarding recommended changes to the Diocesan Covid guidance and we clergy have an opportunity to discuss the proposed changes and ask the bishop clarifying questions.

The changes to the diocesan guidance we received on June 9th is something that many of you have been waiting patiently for. At this meeting, the bishop removed most all of the remaining restrictions but left the implementation of the changes up to each Rector's discretion.

I have written extensively about my reticence to make any drastic changes to our worship until the science supported such changes and the Diocese allowed the changes. You may recall that the CDC first adjusted its masking guidance on May 13, removing the masking and social distancing requirements indoors and out for those who are fully vaccinated. Over the past four weeks, the evidence has shown that this was the right decision. Our Covid case numbers continue to drop, our percentage positive numbers are hovering around two percent, and hospitalizations and deaths continue to decline. After consulting with and receiving the full support of the staff and vestry, I feel that it is now appropriate to make further changes to our worship at St. James.

Beginning Sunday, June 20, the following worship changes will be instituted:

1. The font will return to the back of the nave;
2. The two side altar rails will be returned to the nave;
3. Communion will be distributed standing or kneeling at the side altar rails;
4. The host may be consumed at the altar rail or taken back to your pew to consume;
5. There will be no masking required for those who are fully vaccinated;
6. There will be no social distancing required for those who are fully vaccinated;
7. Those who are fully vaccinated are invited to sing without masking;
8. Those who are not fully vaccinated will still be expected to mask, social distance, and refrain from singing.

While I have restored almost every element of our common worship, I have chosen to introduce these changes first and wait a bit longer before restoring the common cup. While I understand that each of you can determine your own level of acceptable risk in choosing whether to receive the cup or not, I would like for us to become accustomed to these changes first and to wait just a little bit longer to make sure that the downward trends hold.

One final word about masking. I cannot and will not police who is vaccinated and who is not. All I can do is express my sincere hope and expectation that our protocols will be honored and followed. In addition, anyone is welcome to wear a mask at any service for any reason. Just because someone is masked does not mean that they have not been vaccinated. Some just feel safer wearing a mask and I ask you to respect and support them in their choice, as I will.

As always, should there be a sudden spike in cases or should the CDC and Diocesan guidelines change, St. James will adapt our protocols appropriately.

See you on Sunday!

Faithfully,

Fr. Stephen+