

Kirk of Kildaire
Safe Gathering Task Force
Further Revisions to New Covid-19 Policies Due to the Delta Variant
Effective 9-3-2021

The Delta variant of Covid-19 is causing a substantial increase in infections in North Carolina, including Wake County. The situation has deteriorated since we released the latest policies on 8/18. NC daily cases and daily hospitalizations have risen to levels similar to those reported in late January 2021. The percentage of tests that are positive has risen to levels similar to those recorded in mid-January (13-14%). The seriousness of the Delta variant is illustrated by the fact that more people with Covid-19 are hospitalized and ventilated in North Carolina (635 as of 9/1) than at any other time during the pandemic. (Previous infection wave high was 508 on January 17, 2021.)

Unvaccinated people are much more likely to become infected with the original or any variant of Covid-19, than those who are fully vaccinated.

1. The CDC says, “The greatest risk of transmission is among unvaccinated people who are much more likely to contract, and therefore transmit the virus.”
2. With the Delta variant, among those who do become infected, both unvaccinated and vaccinated individuals can spread the virus due to the large number of viral particles in the nasopharynx.
 - However, the viral load is less among vaccinated people.
 - In addition, vaccinated people will reduce the viral load more quickly and thus are likely to be infectious for a shorter time compared to unvaccinated individuals.
3. The CDC is urgently recommending that people be vaccinated and that masks be worn indoors in areas of substantial or high levels of transmission. “High” is the highest level and Wake County is currently in this category.

Vaccination and Testing

1. The Kirk recommends that all members and employees become fully vaccinated unless contraindicated by a medical condition.
2. **All employees who work extensively with children (more than 1 hour per week) will be tested weekly for the virus causing Covid-19, unless they provide proof of complete vaccination status. If they test positive, the Kirk’s protocol for positive tests will be followed. This has been approved by the Session.**
 - a. Complete vaccination status means that two weeks have passed since the second dose of a two-dose protocol (Pfizer, Moderna) or two weeks have passed since immunization with a one-dose protocol (J&J).
 - b. Employees who work extensively with children include the Youth and CE pastors, the music director, and all pre-school employees.
 - c. Testing will occur on Monday or the first day of the week that a person works.
 - d. Testing of unvaccinated employees who work extensively with children will continue until the positive test percentage in NC again falls to 5% or less (seven-day moving average).

- e. The testing program is currently under development.
3. Kirk volunteers who work with children for more than 1 hour per week are already required to be vaccinated.

Masks, Social Distancing, and Meeting Length

1. Masks continue to be required to be worn over mouth and nose in worship and in all indoor meetings/events, with 3-foot distancing between household groups. (This is the WHO-recommended distancing based on the observation that most infections occur between persons interacting within 3 feet of one another.)
2. Mask requirements apply to individuals 5 and over. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children ages 3 and 4 wear masks.
3. Until the percentage of positive tests falls to 5% or less, the only exceptions to wearing masks are as follows:
 - a. Staff when in their personal office.
 - i. Staff in the outer office must don a mask when there is a visitor. Until positive tests fall below 5%, visitors may spend only 5 minutes in the outer office.
 - b. Pastors when speaking during worship. When not speaking, they should wear masks.
 - c. Music group directors who are at a substantial distance (12 feet) from the music group when they need to speak *if they are fully vaccinated*. When conducting, they should wear a mask.
 - d. Other speakers such as someone lecturing to a Sunday School class who is at a substantial distance from the group, *if they are fully vaccinated*.
 - e. Singing choirs when in the choir loft/chancel but only for anthems, responses, and benedictions. For rehearsals, all choirs should wear masks, though they may be removed for a final brief rehearsal of anthems/responses to be sung by the choir at the next service in which they will be singing. Singing choirs should be spaced 6 feet horizontally and 12 feet front to back.

Thus, the previous exception for small groups that wish to allow meeting without masks is rescinded for the time being.

4. Masks are not necessary outdoors as long as 3-foot distancing is maintained. If there is a chance that closer contact may occur, masks must be worn.
5. Larger group events should not include food and drink consumption indoors (but see the exception below for one 5-minute period of snacks and drinks).
6. Indoor meetings should last no longer than roughly one hour until positive test percentages decline to 5% or less. If more time is needed, the meeting should be split so that two different locations are used. As noted above, masks should be worn, and three-foot distancing maintained. Different seating patterns should be employed for any indoor meeting in split locations.
7. Participants should not bring food or drinks to snack/sip during indoor meetings since this means there will be multiple mask removals, the potential for talking unmasked and increased opportunities for virus transmission.

- a. However, a group could decide to have a snack/drinks as a group for 5 minutes at some point in the meeting.
8. People who would like more protection for themselves are encouraged to wear N95, KN95 (Chinese N95), or KF94 (Korean N95) masks. KN95 and KF94 masks are more comfortable than N95 masks. Alternatively, they can wear a cloth mask over a surgical mask (double mask).