

**Kirk of Kildaire
Safe Gathering Task Force**

**Status of Covid-19 Policies and a
Plan for Future Relaxation of Mask Requirements
11/16/2021**

The Delta variant continues to result in daily new hospitalizations in North Carolina that are above 100 (7-day average).

- We no longer use number of new cases/percentage of tests that are positive as indicators of incidence because more people are testing at home and these data are not reported to the state.

We are hopeful that as more people become fully vaccinated, the situation will improve. The availability of boosters, and vaccines for children as young as 5 are important aspects of the overall effort to end the pandemic.

Mask requirements are still in effect

While inside any Kirk building, all individuals aged 5 and older must wear a mask that covers both nose and mouth. Masks are highly recommended for children ages 3 and 4. Three-foot social distancing between households is required. There are only a few exceptions where masks are not required:

- Staff when in their personal office or workspace
- Individuals working alone or with a household member in a room
- Masks are optional for fully vaccinated staff in the office hallways and work room. When in the outer office area and visitors are present, all staff must wear a mask.
- Pastors and other speakers while speaking during worship services
- Choirs when singing anthems, responses, and benedictions
- Choir conductors and speakers such as someone lecturing to a Sunday School class who is at a substantial distance from the group, *if they are fully vaccinated*
- There is no requirement for masks outdoors, but people are cautioned to avoid close contact with others for more than a few minutes.

Other Covid-19 policies listed in the September 3, 2021 document posted on the Kirk website remain in effect. In addition:

- Anyone attending a church-sponsored retreat or other event lasting more than three hours must be vaccinated.
- All staff are required to be fully vaccinated or existing staff may choose to be tested weekly in lieu of vaccination.
- All volunteers who work with children more than one hour per week are required to be fully vaccinated.

Persons who know they have been exposed to Covid-19 or have symptoms, regardless of vaccination status, are asked to stay home for 14 days since exposure. (This is more stringent than the CDC suggests but gives us a simple rule to remember and apply.)

Worship materials

Because surface transmission of Covid-19 is quite rare, we have returned Bibles and hymnals to the pews.

Policy relaxation when the state-wide 7-day average of new hospitalizations is less than 75

The following will apply to groups of adults and high school students:

- Masks will be optional for fully vaccinated individuals if no one in the group objects. For example: committee meetings, Sunday School classes.
- Meetings/events may last for up to two hours in the same room. (Currently, the restriction is one hour in the same room.)
- Meals may be served.

Policy relaxation on February 1, 2022, if the 7-day average of new hospitalizations is less than 50

By February 1, parents of children ages 5-11 will have had sufficient time to get their children immunized. If hospitalizations have decreased below 50:

- Masks will be optional for fully vaccinated individuals for worship and other functions where there are no children below the age of 5.
- For children under the age of 5, Sunday School will be extended through the worship service, or another program will be offered, so that they will not be exposed to potential infection from adults not wearing masks in worship.
- The last three rows of the center pews will be reserved for families with children ages 5-11 who are not yet fully vaccinated. Immunocompromised people will also be accommodated in these pews. All individuals sitting in these rows must wear masks.
- Offering plates and communion service may return to the pews as may welcome pads and other miscellaneous materials at the discretion of the Worship Ministry Team.
- We will maintain 3-feet distancing until new hospitalizations in North Carolina are below 25 per day (seven-day average).