

Kirk of Kildaire
Safe Gathering Task Force

Covid-19 Policy Update – August 17, 2022

Suspension of Mask Requirements for Indoor Activities (See Below for Nursery and Pre-School)

Earlier this summer, many people had been wondering when we could make wearing of masks optional for indoor activities at the Kirk given that people have many options to protect themselves and numerous venues no longer require masks.

The Safe Gathering Task Force met in June to discuss this issue in detail. We considered the following:

- ❖ While hospitalizations have increased recently from the low levels in the spring, people who are vaccinated and boosted have a low likelihood of being hospitalized.
- ❖ People who are immune compromised can obtain Evusheld, two injections of monoclonal antibodies, that provides about 6-months protection.
- ❖ Anyone who is concerned about Covid infection can wear a close-fitting N95, KN95, or KF94 mask and have good protection. These are readily available from suppliers such as Amazon.
 - *We urge people with the following risk factors to consider wearing an N95, KN95, or KF94 mask:*
 - *Age over 65, diabetes, obesity, history of cancer, history of stroke, history of smoking, chronic lung disease, chronic kidney disease, chronic liver disease, heart disease, currently pregnant or less than 42 days since the end of pregnancy.*
 - *Immune compromised.*
- ❖ We have programs in place to reduce the concentration of viral particles: fresh air ventilation through our air handlers, improved filtration, and UV-C or particle ionization disinfection.

Based on this, we concluded that people can and should take ownership of their own protection. Thus, we suspended the mask requirement for indoor activities in June, with the exception of the Preschool and the Nursery (but see below for the upcoming policy change for these programs).

Even if hospitalizations increase further, we will only reinstate the mask requirement if vaccines and boosters are no longer effective in reducing the risk of serious disease.

Masks Optional for the Preschool and the Nursery Effective September 1, 2022

Toward the end of June, vaccines became available for children as young as six months. Staff communicated with parents who have children in these programs and found no objections to making masks optional. The Task Force therefore decided to make masks optional effective September 1, 2022.

Social distancing

We strongly recommend that people allow 3-feet spacing between households, but this is no longer required.

- ❖ However, choir members must be spaced 3 feet horizontally and 6 feet front-to-back for the time being.

Testing requirements

Testing is required for staff as outlined in the testing and exposure protocol (below).

Worship materials

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

Communion can now be offered by intinction or passing of communion elements down the rows.

- ❖ Individuals serving communion should wear masks as they will come closer than three feet to those receiving communion elements.
- ❖ Individuals serving communion should sanitize their hands just prior to serving to avoid transmission of other viruses/bacteria that can spread via surface transmission.

Consumption of food and drink

There are no longer restrictions on these activities, however the period of meal consumption should not exceed 20 minutes so that those with risk factors are not exposed to excessive infection potential while not wearing masks.

Vaccination Requirements for Staff

New staff members must be fully vaccinated, including boosters recommended by the CDC.

Updated Covid-19 Exposure and Positive Test Policy **8/12/2022**

Testing requirements

Testing is required for staff as outlined in the exposure protocol (below) and whenever a staff member has two or more of the following symptoms:

- Fever, chills, or night sweats
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Congestion or runny nose
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea

Members and friends may elect not to be tested in response to symptoms or after close contact with an infected person as outlined below. Those who do not follow the testing policy should avoid Kirk in-person activities for 10 days after close contact with an infected person or 10 days after the appearance of symptoms, whichever is later.

Background

The CDC has relaxed and clarified its recommendations for testing and isolation based on the latest available information. In the sections below, items in *italics* are modifications to our policy based on this.

Note that where masking is specified, a well-fitting mask is required. Most cloth masks and even surgical masks do not qualify because they have too many gaps around the edges. KN-95, KF-94 and N-95 masks are well-fitting as is double-masking with a cloth mask over a surgical mask.

- ❖ CDC uses the term “isolation” to refer to behavior after testing positive and “quarantine” to refer to behavior after close contact with someone known to have Covid-19. This is a technical difference – the term “isolation” is used exclusively in this document.

Where a Covid-19 test is indicated, a rapid (antigen) test is fully acceptable, and at this point in the pandemic is preferable as a follow-up test after an initial positive PCR or antigen test. Most home tests are antigen tests. After an initial positive test and resolution of symptoms, an antigen test will return a positive result if you are still infectious to others. PCR tests may continue to give positive results by detecting genetic viral fragments when you are not infectious.

Counting days after exposure or receiving a positive test

Day 0 is the day of exposure/day of specimen collection for a positive test/day of the appearance of symptoms. Thus, for example, if you received a positive result and you were tested on a Monday, Day 1 would be Tuesday and Day 5 would be Saturday.

What to Do After a Positive Covid-19 Test

If no symptoms (asymptomatic)

- ❖ Isolate for 5 days after the day of specimen collection.
- ❖ *If you continue to have no symptoms, you may end isolation on Day 6.*
- ❖ *If you develop symptoms within 10 days of when your specimen was collected, the clock restarts at 0 on the day of symptom onset. Then, follow the protocol for what you should do with a positive test and symptoms (directly below).*

If symptoms

- ❖ Isolate for at least five days. If you are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and your other symptoms are improving (but no earlier than 5 days), you can end isolation but must wear a mask for five additional days (i.e., through Day 10).
 - *With two sequential negative Covid tests 48 hours apart, you may remove your mask sooner than Day 11.*
 - *If your symptoms have not improved, isolate until they do.*
 - *If you experienced shortness of breath, had difficulty breathing, were hospitalized, or have a weakened immune system, you should isolate through Day 10.*
 - *After you have ended isolation, if your COVID-19 symptoms recur or worsen, restart your isolation at Day 0.*
- ❖ Here's a visual illustration that you may find helpful:

Day 0	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11
Positive specimen collected	Isolate	Isolate	Isolate	Isolate	Isolate	Wear Mask	Mask Optional				

What to do After Close Contact with Someone Who Has Covid-19

We define this as less than 3 feet for 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period.

Isolation is no longer necessary regardless of vaccination status. However, you must wear a mask for 10 days and get a Covid-19 test after 5 days.

- ❖ Watch for symptoms and get tested if they occur. If you test positive, follow the above protocol for positive test results.

Questions?

If you have questions about what you should do in the above circumstances, contact our Parish Nurse, Caryn Mastalli: cmastalli@kirkofkildaire.org