

2/14/22

Covid-19 Recommendations Update

We have come through the Omicron surge. As of February 11, Monroe County cases have declined by 88% from the peak of the surge. Other counties in the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester may have not come down as far Monroe County, but they are continuing to decline. I believe it is safe to resume the parish protocols that were in place last fall.

As of Thursday, February 10, the Governor lifted the indoor mask mandate. However, in her announcement she said businesses and organizations, including churches, can still require masks. Bishop Lane stated that our first priority is to do no harm. I know many want to immediately make mask wearing optional in church. However, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention still recommends that we should wear masks indoors at our level of transmission in the diocese. We need to protect the vulnerable in our congregations.

I am hopeful that we are close to saying that wearing masks in church is optional for the vaccinated (CDC Guidance). However, I do not think it is prudent to remove the indoor mask mandate at this time. I urge you to continue the mask mandate for the next three weeks, at which time we will reevaluate the metrics. This will be about the same time that the state reevaluates the masking policy for schools.

A reminder of former recommendations:

- If any member of a family is ill, experiencing Covid-19 symptoms, or who has been potentially exposed to Covid-19, the family should not attend church in person.
- Everyone should wear a mask, covering their mouth and nose in the church and parish house, regardless of vaccination status.
- Do not do indoor coffee hours, buffets, dinners, or receptions.
- Do not use the common cup.
- Do not pass the plate, except if an offering basket with handles is used.
- Socially distance except for families and pods.
- At the peace, it is better to bow, wave, or give an elbow bump.
- Congregational and choral singing is allowed while wearing masks.

Faithfully,

Ron

The Rev. Ronald B. Young
Chair of the *Thriving in the COVID World Task Force*

