



THE STANDING COMMITTEE
Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee

June 1, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

Once again, we are coming to you with an update to our diocesan Covid guidelines. God willing, and all of us continuing to do our part in ending the pandemic, this will be the last adjustment that we need to make to the guidelines that have kept us safe these many months.

It is clear that we have entered a new season in our struggle with the Covid-19 pandemic. Recommendations for masking and social distancing, for indoor and outdoor gatherings, for those who have been vaccinated and those who have not, have changed dramatically in the last month. In response to these developments, the Standing Committee, along with Provisional Bishop Designee Jeff Lee, is announcing that, as of this Sunday, June 6, 2021:

- The diocesan Returning to Public Worship Guidelines are to be read as recommendations, not as mandates.
- Decisions about returning to public worship in the Diocese of Milwaukee are to be made at the local parish level.
- The diocesan Regathering Risk Assessment Dashboard will no longer be updated. Links to state health department data will be added to the diocesan website.

We make this announcement deeply aware that there are some among us who are not yet eligible to receive the vaccine, and that there are some among us for whom the vaccine has not produced the needed antibodies to protect them.

It is our hope and our expectation that these decisions will be made by local clergy and Vestries or Bishop's Committees, with the input of the members of the congregation, and that provisions will be made so that all of us, vaccinated and unvaccinated, immune and immune suppressed will be able to gather at God's table together.

The recommendations in the attached Returning to Public Worship Guidelines are the gold standard; the closest that we can come to eliminating the risk we face by gathering together. They are an important resource for all of us as we work to develop a safety plan for our congregations, and we hope that you will continue to use them as you decide what is right for your community. The Way Forward Task Force has received expressions of thanksgiving from the Standing Committee and from Bishop Lee, and its members have been given an honorable discharge from their service. We, as a diocese, owe them our gratitude for their willingness to engage a difficult and often thankless task on our behalf.

We ask that any questions or concerns about this change be sent to members of the Standing Committee for consultation and clarification. May the workings of the Holy Spirit bind us ever more closely to one another in our common life in this diocese.

Standing Committee, Diocese of Milwaukee