

July 30,2021

Virginia Annual Conference,

On July 27, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a new recommendation regarding mask-wearing. First, we would like to remind all our churches that the CDC functions as an advisory board, and the Governor encourages Virginians to follow the CDC guidelines. Second, we allowed fully vaccinated members to unmask in our transition from Healthy Church Teams (HCT) to Post-Covid Re-Entry Group (PRG). Therefore, unvaccinated members should be wearing a mask in all functions of the church. We still believe that the best practice is for everyone, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, to wear a mask at public gatherings.

According to the new CDC guidelines, it says, "wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area [of substantial or high transmission](#)." Churches and their PRG team should observe the transmission rate within their community and decide whether or not to ask fully vaccinated members to wear a mask.

The PRG team's recommendation on mask-wearing has been consistent. Asking fully vaccinated members to mask does not negate the efficacy of the vaccine. Instead, it shows how we need to continue loving and protecting everyone. The best-proven method to prevent further loss and protect each other from this variant is by having everyone fully vaccinated. We ask each church to continue encouraging everyone eligible to be vaccinated to get the shot.

At this time, the Bishop and Cabinet appreciate the local church's effort on setting parameters to stop the spread of COVID-19 and keeping their community safe. We ask each PRG team to utilize the resource below and other resources, such as PRG page, CDC, and VDH, to make safe and sound decisions.

Thank you for your leadership!

In Christ,

Bishop, Cabinet, & VAUMC PRG Team

Resources

CDC COVID-19 Integrated County View -

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

This page helps churches to see the level of community transmission in their county. Can be used as a tool to learn if the county your church is located in is in the high transmission area. If you have members residing in adjacent counties, please make sure to check their transmission rate as well.

CDC guidance for implementing COVID-19 prevention strategies -

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7030e2.htm>

This page offers guidelines on how to best use of the data in determining if your church is in need to revisit your plan on masking.

Virginia Department of Health COVID Data -

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-in-virginia-locality/>

This page helps churches to search various COVID-19 related data in their community, surrounding their local church.

Reporting Positive cases - <https://vaumc.org/prg-best-practices/>

On this page, please scroll down and find, “What happens when the church is informed about a positive case?” It provides a step-by-step procedure to report and inform in helping your church to respond.

Proactive Response to surging cases -

<https://doc.vaumc.org/PRG/Proactiveresponseexample.docx>

A customizable plan to proactively respond to situations where their community spread surges. Special thanks to St. Luke’s UMC, Danville District, for sharing this information.

For more information email the Rev. Seungsoo ‘RJ’ Jun at Serving@vaumc.org