



Northwest Washington Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

March 4, 2022

Dear Beloveds of the Northwest Washington Synod,

It has been a long two years as we have grappled with COVID-19. I am so grateful to all of you for your love and careful consideration of the most vulnerable among us. As our state prepares to lift the mask mandate on March 12, we are thankful that infections and hospitalization rates are declining. We are hopeful that this trend continues.

During this time, we continue to trust in science and hold onto our values of loving God and loving neighbor. We ask that each congregation's safety team continue to follow CDC and local guidelines - and monitor COVID numbers in their area for their specific context. (Please refer to the CDC statistics on COVID-19 Community Levels by county here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>)

As the state mask mandate is lifted, congregations may consider these protocols:

- **Mask** if you are at high risk, around others who are at high risk, with children under five, singing, or in crowded spaces
- **Improve indoor air** ventilation and filtration.
- Make available and encourage hand sanitizer use
- Get your COVID-19 **vaccine and booster shot**, if eligible
- Stay home (**isolate/quarantine**) if feeling sick and **get tested** if you have symptoms or an exposure to COVID-19
- Continue to serve Holy Communion in a safe way
- Establish/continue safe food preparation and handling guidelines
- Consider other safety precautions that are unique to your setting

For additional guidance, we encourage you to check for updates as they are made available on the King County Faith-Based Organization page (in particular, we have asked them to make suggestions about singing) <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/health/covid-19/community-faith-organizations.aspx>.

Find their FAQ page here:

<https://kingcounty.gov/depts/health/covid-19/community-faith-organizations/FAQ.aspx>

I could not be more grateful for all of you for the care and love you have shown one another in this time. I know that it has been difficult, and it has been hard. And yet, we trust that we are moving towards a new day. May you continue to live in the grace given to us through our Savior Jesus Christ.

In the Hope of Christ,

Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee