



Dear saints of St. Peter's,

I trust you are aware of the rapid decline in new COVID cases in our community over the last few weeks. I am encouraged at this good news. As such, I write to let you know of some coming changes to our operations, *effective November 14, 2021*.

Our decisions about response to the ongoing pandemic are guided by two trusted sources: the Mayo Clinic's statistics and projections about COVID cases, and the CDC's guidelines for community groups. I believe all that I am writing to you here is consistent with them.

First, the changes to our worship life:

- The distribution of communion will return to the altar rail, and will consist of a real loaf of bread and the common cup of wine. (For a time, individual cups of wine will remain available upon request at the altar rail.)
- The choir will join the altar party in procession at the beginning and the end of each service at which they sing.
- Masks will no longer be required for gatherings at St. Peter's, including worship. To augment the safety of those with continued health concerns, the parish will provide N-95 masks (proven largely effective at protecting the wearer from airborne particles) for anyone who wishes to wear them.

Second, the changes to our common life outside of worship:

- Events in Burns Hall will resume, including bereavement lunches and breakfasts. NOTE: To give breakfast teams a chance to prepare for this change, the first Sunday breakfast will not be held until Sunday, December 5.
- Burns Hall and other common spaces will once again be available for group rentals.

Finally, please note the things that have NOT changed:

- Our understanding that occasions for good fellowship, such as handshaking and the passing of the peace, can also be effective pathways for the spread of viruses. Therefore, we will provide additional hand sanitizer in pews and in the aisle on the way to the altar for your use.
- Our fervent request that, if you are feeling unwell, you will show your care for the other members of our parish by not attending worship or events until you recover. We will continue to livestream services for viewing from home at such times.
- Our guiding principle throughout the pandemic, and for our entire Christian life: “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4).

Please note once more that these changes will not take effect for three more weeks, until **November 14**, to give more time for the downward trend to continue. And should case numbers increase again, we will be prepared to reinstitute protocols to maximize our safety as we gather, using the same metrics as before.

I remind you that the CDC’s guidelines regarding your safety at public gatherings assume that you have been vaccinated. I encourage you, if you have not yet, to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as quickly as possible. I also encourage you to remember that, as of the writing of this letter, children under the age of 12 cannot yet be vaccinated, and ask you to respect the space of families with children who may be more comfortable maintaining a larger area of social distancing.

I know that these changes will cause discomfort for some, even as others rejoice. However you receive them, please know that it is a difficult time to make decisions for groups, particularly those groups whose most important work is in gathering for corporate worship. Therefore, I ask for your prayers, and assure you that you remain in mine. I am, as always,

Yours in Christ Jesus,
joe+

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe+" in a cursive, flowing script.