



# The Episcopal Diocese of Newark

The Right Reverend Carlye J. Hughes, Bishop of Newark

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“Let the grace of this Holy Communion make us one body,  
one spirit in Christ,  
that we may worthily serve the world in his name.”  
*Eucharistic Prayer C, BCP p 372*

March 26, 2022

Dear Companions on the Journey,

As our life with COVID-19 continues to take shape it seems important to note that, while we enjoy this time of relaxed safety precautions, the pandemic has not ended. New COVID-19 variants will develop and will likely be highly transmissible. For the first 18 months of pandemic, our goal was to lower the risk of spreading illness. With the development and availability of vaccines and the growth in a variety of treatment options, hospitals have increased in their ability to meet the need of all patients without being overwhelmed by Covid cases. At this stage we are adjusting to life **with** COVID-19, which will require us to be continual learners, watchful interpreters of health data, and flexible navigators of safety precautions.

As we add activities and practices back to our life, some will need to be adjusted for these present circumstances. This is true of the following areas:

**Congregational and Choral Singing.** The CDC and a number of associations for choral music have adjusted guidance for singing. The adjustments reflect the shift to the CDC’s “Community Level” tool. Congregation singing can take place when your community falls with the CDC’s “Low” Community Level. This activity is not risk-free, especially for the immunocompromised or unvaccinated. Continued attention to ventilation, social distance, and wearing masks while singing lowers the risk for all members.

Many of our choirs have begun singing, some with limited numbers of participants. In the “Low” Community Level, choirs may return to leading worship with masking, distancing of 3’ or more, and frequent air exchange due to adequate ventilation. Special attention to ventilation is required for practice sessions.

As reference for singing without masks, a national vaccination rate of 80% or higher would lower risk sufficiently to do so. It is possible that your community may achieve that rate before the nation does. Your local department of health will be the best monitor of that information. If your community is at an 80% or higher vaccination rate, you may consider singing as a “mask optional” activity. Even with a very high vaccination rate, immunosuppressed and unvaccinated people will need to use a mask when there is singing. The current national vaccination rate is 60 – 65%. New Jersey’s vaccination rate as of March 20, 2022 is 74.8%.

**Return of the Common Cup on Palm Sunday.** Communicants have been asked to refrain from receiving from the cup since the beginning of this pandemic out of concern for neighbor and for our common health. Beginning on Palm Sunday, April 10, 2022, I am asking for a return to regular reception of the Sacrament in both forms of bread and wine.

While the cup will be offered to all communicants, it is still perfectly acceptable to receive in one kind only with the bread. The full grace and power of the sacramental encounter with Christ is present in either the bread or the wine, whether one consumes one or both. Continuing to teach the basics of sacramental theology is important, such as this principle (called concomitance).

Materials: Chalice and wine – While there is no scientific study proving the safety of receiving the cup by mouth, there are no documented cases of infection arising from use of the Common Cup in the history of our

church. Some scientists have suggested that the combination of alcohol, precious metal, and carefully wiping the cup after each sip may decrease the likelihood of transmission of illness when receiving the cup during Holy Eucharist.

The return of the cup will require adjusted practices for some of our churches. The chalice must be lined with precious metal such as silver or gold. Glass and ceramic chalices will not suffice at this time. If your parish is in need of a chalice, please contact Jim Caputo ([jcaputo@dioceseofnewark.org](mailto:jcaputo@dioceseofnewark.org)) for assistance. Wine or port will need to be used for Holy Communion. Grape juice and other non-alcoholic beverages may not be used with the Common Cup.

Preparation – Clean and sanitized hands are an important practice at Holy Communion. Do not use gloves, tongs, or anything else to deliver the host with or without intinction into an open palm. It is much more difficult to know if you have made contact with a communicant's hands and need to re-sanitize if you are using gloves or tongs. The hands of the Eucharistic Minister, whether clergy or laity, whether administering bread or wine, will need to be washed or sanitized before the Eucharistic prayer is begun as well as just after receiving communion.

Administering the cup: by mouth – The customary practice of administering the cup, rotating it slightly and wiping the edge of the chalice (inside and out) with a clean purificator is still the best practice for this form of administering the cup. Eucharistic Ministers may need to do some retraining or practicing with this, since we have not administered the cup in over two years. An ample supply of clean purificators will be needed for careful wiping after each sip from the cup.

Administering the cup: intinction – It is clear that the practice of intinction, or dipping the host into the wine, by multiple hands in the same cup introduces an unsanitary element into what has otherwise been deemed a safe and holy practice. Still, I recognize that some will not want to receive by mouth. Intinction may take place as follows: the minister distributing bread dips the wafer into the wine and then places it on the open palm of the recipient. This will mean that the communicant has to indicate if they wish to receive by intinction and that the chalice is nearby. **Under no circumstances should a communicant dip the bread into the cup themselves.**

Preparing the liturgical team will be important along with teaching the congregation. While regular attendance at Eucharistic services yields a great familiarity with our liturgy, it is vitally important for us to teach sacramental theology. I am often asked to explain the purpose and importance of our liturgy on my Sunday visitations. We have a unique opportunity to teach about our worship and sacraments as changes are made.

Many Episcopalians in our diocese rediscovered ancient traditions such as lay-led daily offices, prayer, centering prayer, Bible study, faith groups, and evangelism that have helped to support and strengthen the faith of those unable to receive Holy Communion. My greatest hope is that we and our members continue to grow into a stronger and renewed faith as we return to regular worship practices.

If you have questions, please contact Canon Wright ([awright@dioceseofnewark.org](mailto:awright@dioceseofnewark.org)). My prayers for you and your families continue.

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carlye J. Hughes". The signature is written in black ink and is preceded by a small cross symbol.

The Rt. Rev. Carlye J. Hughes  
XI Bishop of Newark