



The Diocese of Bethlehem COVID-19 Protocols for Gathering

The Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem recommends the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) "Considerations for Communities of Faith" web page](#) for detailed advice about preventing the spread of COVID-19.

General Recommendations

These general recommendations for gathering are adapted from the CDC's recommended steps to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19:

- Correctly [wear a mask](#) at all times that completely covers your nose and mouth
- Physical distancing:
 - Stay at least [6 feet away](#) from others who do not live with you
 - Stay at least [20 feet away](#) from others who do not live with you when singing
- [Stay home when you are sick](#)
- [Wash your hands](#) frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or use [hand sanitizer](#) containing at least 60% alcohol)
- [Get vaccinated](#) when the vaccine is available to you
- [Get tested](#) if you have signs or [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, or if you think you may have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19

Even if you and others (including [children](#)) do not feel sick and do not have any [symptoms](#), **you can still spread COVID-19 to family, friends, and community.**

Do NOT be around others if you have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19, if you are [sick](#), or if you have [tested positive for COVID-19](#).

Specific Recommendations

Singing

Congregational or choir singing is discouraged at this time. Evidence shows that singing is more likely to spread the virus than speaking. Singing may be considered if singers are wearing a facial covering at all times and are physically distanced at least 20 feet from others not living with the singer.

Gathering Capacity

Indoor gathering capacity is determined by the circumstance and space.

- For non-singing gathering, stay at least [6 feet away](#) from others who do not live with you
 - For gathering that includes singing, stay at least [20 feet away](#) from others who do not live with you
- Determine your gathering capacity by applying the distancing guidance (6 feet or 20 feet) to your space.



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Books of Common Prayer and Hymnals

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the CDC discourages the use of shared Books of Common Prayer and hymnals. Encourage parishioners to bring their own books or make single-use bulletins available. If personal books or single-use bulletins are not possible, ensure the sharing of books is separated by a quarantine of at least 24 hours.

Eucharist

Preparation:

- Prepare in a well-ventilated room (open windows/doors, etc.) at least 24 hours before Eucharist is to be celebrated/shared.
- Individual preparing should hand sanitize, mask, and glove before preparation of Eucharist begins.
- Individual communion wafers should be placed with tongs into cupcake holders or similar packaging pre-prepared and organized on platters.
- Place a cloth or plastic covering over the prepared cupcake holders
- Leave prepared trays sitting for at least 24 hours in a well-ventilated area, ensuring no one enters the area or touches the Eucharist.

Celebration of the Eucharist:

- On day of Eucharist, a designated, masked person will sanitize hands liberally, glove, and carry the covered trays containing the pre-prepared wafers onto the Eucharist table/altar.
- The trays will remain covered throughout the celebration of the Eucharist.
- The celebrant will preside over the Eucharistic prayer fully masked, with a single wafer/host and chalice outside of the elements pre-prepared in the covered trays. The celebrant should consume those elements at the conclusion of the service in the sacristy or other appropriate area at a distance from others.
- At the Fraction, a designated, masked person will liberally sanitize hands, glove, and carry the trays containing the now consecrated wafers near the designated exiting area. They will then remove the cloth or plastic covering from the elements.
- At the Dismissal, following protocols established for seating and dismissal, congregants will be dismissed in an orderly fashion to ensure proper distancing. They will be instructed to sanitize their hands and then take a cupcake holder containing the sacrament, being extra careful not to touch other cupcake holders. They will be also be instructed to consume the wafer after they depart from the service.
- Trained ushers will be present to guide parishioners regarding process, if needed.

We are grateful to the COVID task force of the Cathedral Church of the Nativity for their development and testing of these Eucharist procedures.