

February 8, 2022

Health Advisory Panel Important Update

On the advice of the Health Advisory Panel, **Bishop Haynes is lifting the current suspension of in-person worship in the Diocese effective immediately.** The only diocesan-wide worship protocol remaining in place is the continuing ban on use of a shared chalice.

The Commonwealth's seven-day average of coronavirus cases per 100,000 people has fallen from just below 150 per day to 64.2 over the past two weeks, easing the burden on many – though not all – hospitals. Outbreaks remain a concern, as does the capacity of local health care facilities to respond to the medical needs of all, and both merit consideration by parish Health Coordinators and Health Equity Teams. The number of deaths, a trailing indicator, remains high in some localities but not all. These and other indicators informing best practices are updated daily by the Virginia Department of Health at [Locality - Coronavirus \(virginia.gov\)](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/Localities/Coronavirus) to facilitate monitoring.

In lifting the suspension of in-person worship, Bishop Haynes is restoring agency to parish leadership to establish norms guiding worship practices. This empowers the clergy and vestry of each parish to make decisions, in consultation with their Health Coordinator or Health Equity Teams, regarding when it is appropriate to resume public worship and establish appropriate protocols for safe in-person worship.

Those responsible for activities other than worship (including meeting protocols and appropriate norms for Christian Formation, youth events, and overnight or weekend activities) are counseled to continue to pay careful attention to the impact of the pandemic on best practices, including mask-wearing, physical distancing, contact tracing, and the like, and to monitor the capacity of local health care facilities to provide timely health care to all who need it.