**Virginia Synod 2021 COVID-19 Pandemic Office Protocols**

**Updated May 1, 2021**

“Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.” - Philippians 2:4

While much has changed with the spread of COVID-19, the core values of the Virginia Synod - Christ, peace, community, and compassion - remain constant and provide guidance as we respond to the pandemic.

The Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for our staff and our volunteers. The goal of these protocols is to promote a safe working environment for the Office of the Bishop staff and to mitigate the potential transmission of COVID-19 or any illness as we undertake the ministry of the Virginia Synod.

Our plan addresses:

* Telework and In-Office Policies
* Screening and Policies for COVID Impacted Individuals
* Hygiene and respiratory etiquette
* Administrative tactics for social distancing
* Housekeeping – cleaning, disinfecting, and decontamination
* Prompt identification and isolation of sick persons

**Telework, In-Office, and Travel Policies**

While our desire to gather in-person and to return to ‘normal’ patterns of office life may be strong, COVID-19 remains a significant risk to the health and well-being of our entire community. Out of concern for the broader community and in the interest of health and safety, the Virginia Synod Office has developed Telework, In-Office, and Travel Policies in response to the guidance from the Governor of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control.

**Beginning May 1, 2021**

* Staff are encouraged to work remotely whenever possible and to exercise an abundance of caution and care for one another in their interactions.
* Staff are encouraged to be vaccinated.
* Staff will follow the current COVID-19 guidance from the Governor of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Health, and the CDC.
  + Governor of Virginia
    - Office of the Governor Current Guidelines are available at: <https://www.virginia.gov/coronavirus/forwardvirginia/>
    - Office of the Governor Amended Executive Order 72 addressing COVID-19 Restrictions can be found at: <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/executive-actions/>
  + Virginia Department of Health
    - Guidance for Schools, Workplaces, and Community Locations can be found at: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/schools-workplaces-community-locations/>
    - COVID-19 in Virginia Dashboard: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-in-virginia/>
  + Centers for Disease Control
    - CDC Guidance for Community, Work, and School: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>
    - CDC Guidance for Fully Vaccinated People: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>
* The following questions should be considered when deciding if it is appropriate to travel for in-person meetings, to preach at an in-person congregational worship service, or to attend an in-person ministry event.

1. Is the staff member vaccinated and comfortable attending an in-person meeting? *(If the staff member is uncomfortable attending an in-person meeting, then the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop fully supports that decision.)*
2. Is it possible to conduct this meeting/event digitally?
3. Does this meeting/event require the in-person presence of a Synod staff member for theological, constitutional, or ecclesiological reasons?
4. Is this meeting/event critically important or potentially creating an unnecessary public health risk, or could this meeting/event wait until 70% of the residents of Virginia have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19?
5. Does this meeting/event encourage individuals who are potentially at-risk or who are caring for at-risk individuals to gather in-person?
6. Is it agreed that all participants will be asked to wear a mask and follow the current COVID-19 guidance from the Governor of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Health, and the CDC?
7. Will the meeting/event take place in an outdoor setting or in a well ventilated indoor setting?
8. Is it agreed that the meeting/event will take place in accordance with the current COVID-19 guidance from the Governor of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Health, and the CDC?

**Screening and Isolating Sick Persons**

**Stay home if you’re feeling sick.**

As a synod staff member, we expect you to monitor your own health and screen yourself for COVID-19 symptoms. *(replace all employee reference with staff member)*

**Monitoring your health​:**

[Click here to review symptoms](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)​ identified by the CDC. Your health care provider can determine if you should be tested and can recommend a testing site (​note: Portico Benefits covers testing 100% ​).

**Self-screening​:**

Before coming into the office, please complete this self-screening questionnaire based on current CDC guidance. ​

***Questions:***

1. Within the last 14 days, have you had close contact with a person who has been diagnosed/confirmed with COVID-19 by a medical professional?

2. Have you had at least two of the following symptoms in the last 72 hours: fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, muscle pain, sore throat or loss of taste or smell?

● A fever is defined as a temperature of 100.4 or higher

3. Do you have new or abnormal symptoms of respiratory illness like cough or shortness of breath or difficulty breathing?

[Or take this short questionnaire from the CDC & Apple Inc.](https://www.apple.com/covid19/)

**Our​ ​office guidelines​:**

● If you answer “yes” to any of the above questions stay home, inform your supervisor, and contact your health care provider to inquire about being tested for COVID-19.

● You may be able to work remotely if you answered “yes” and believe you feel well enough to work.

● If you experience symptoms or feel sick during the workday, please notify your supervisor. You will be asked to work off site and to contact your healthcare provider.

[CDC’s guidelines for treatment](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html) | [Portico COVID-19 Support Page](https://www.porticobenefits.org/Campaign/Resources)

**COVID-19 PREVENTION**

**Handwashing**

20 seconds of hand washing with soap and water throughout the day can keep the doctor away. Please practice good hand hygiene.

**Respiratory Etiquette**

If you are in the same area with another person, everyone in the room will wear a mask to protect one another. Avoid touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

**Social Distancing**

You and our guests are required to observe CDC recommended social distance guidelines. Signage is posted at the entrance of each building providing notice of social distancing and mask requirements. When this is not feasible physical barriers or other methods may be implemented.

**Protective Equipment**

Depending on your job duties, Personal Protection Equipment may be required. What exactly does that mean?

● Wear a face mask outside of your office space and inside your office space if you will be closer than six feet away from another employee or volunteer;

● Roanoke College requires individuals to wear a mask outdoors when maintaining 6 feet of distance is not possible;

**Hospitality**

The exterior door is to remain closed and locked. Visitors will be admitted by staff and office protocols explained.

● Any guest visiting the office must sign in.

● Guests must wear a face mask

● Staff and the guest are required to wear a face mask throughout the meeting;

● We ask any guest who is COVID-positive or symptomatic to arrange a call in lieu of an in-person visit;

● Signs regarding these requirements will be posted on building entrances and exits as well as the synod’s website.

**Housekeeping**

All of us have a responsibility to routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces throughout the week.

**Other Preventative Measures**

If you test positive for COVID-19, please alert the Bishop and/or Rebecca immediately.