

COVID-19 Update from the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop: July 2021

With the expiration of Executive Order 79 from Governor Northam on June 30, 2021, the Commonwealth of Virginia's "Commonsense Public Health Restrictions Due to Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)" are no longer in effect. While COVID-19, especially the new Delta Variant, still pose a health risk, government requirements for masking in public spaces, social distancing, and limits on public gatherings have been lifted.

While this change marks and significant progress in the efforts to overcome COVID-19, the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop encourages everyone to continue to use Virginia Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control, and Ecumenical Guidelines to help guide decisions on the best ways to gather for worship, education, fellowship, service, and ministry. The following links may provide useful information:

- o 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/>
- o 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>
- o Care-Filled Worship and Sacramental Life in a Lingering Pandemic
 - https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Care-filled_Worship_and_Sacramental_Life_in_a_Lingering_Pandemic.pdf

In the days and weeks to come, there will be many decisions to make, please continue to care for those who are at-risk, to encourage that everyone be vaccinated, and to work together for the good of the whole community.

Finally, the Office of the Bishop has received several questions about the legality of masks in Virginia now that Executive Order 79 has expired. You can use the following link to read Code 18.2-422 on wearing of masks in certain places:

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title18.2/chapter9/section18.2-422/>. It is best to consult with local law enforcement to understand how this code will be interpreted in your community now that the Executive Order has expired.