

ECC COVID-19 Update 7/16/22

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As many of you are aware, we remain in the midst of another surge in COVID-19 cases. This particular Omicron subvariant, dubbed BA.5, appears to be even more transmissible than other variants, causing a prolonged elevation in cases, and is able to overcome immunity from earlier infections. In addition, it appears to be driving up hospitalization rates, and has caused Snohomish County to enter CDC COVID-19 community level RED. King County may not be far behind. As a reminder, the CDC COVID-19 community level is based on 3 factors: new case numbers, current COVID-19 hospital admission rate, and percent of hospital inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients. This designation gives us insight about not only how infectious and severe the virus is, but also whether our health system is being overwhelmed. In Snohomish County, all 3 factors have pushed them into the RED category. ****

The Elder Board and the COVID-19 Taskforce are constantly trying to strike a balance between the spiritual needs of our church and the health and welfare of our members. As a society, we are still learning how to “live with this virus,” from healthcare experts to politicians, business leaders, schools, and churches. We also know the reality of pandemic fatigue and struggles, and we want to “put the virus behind us,” but the virus continues to adapt and challenge us. **The COVID-19 taskforce wants to be clear: our guidance and recommendations are guidelines.** These guidelines are not mandates. They are suggested best practices for our church. Just like when you see your doctor, who carefully gives you advice. Ultimately, it will be the church leaders, the Executive committee, the congregational councils, the fellowship leaders, small groups, and individuals who make the decisions of whether and to what extent our advice is followed. The ramifications of COVID-19 infection can be heavy, ranging from mild infections (the majority of cases) to long COVID (up to 5%), hospitalizations, or worse. With larger group gatherings in church (such as worship and retreats), there is the added risk of super spreader events, where a large number of people can be infected with COVID-19 at the same time. While society may not seem to care about COVID-19 infections anymore, we recognize that many church activities inherently carry more risk of exposure, and we especially care for those in our congregation who are at higher risk for serious infection.

We have updated our guidelines to reflect the contact risk most people continue to experience, including our kids, as well as providing some safety measures to allow those who are in decision-making positions to weigh the spiritual importance of certain activities against risk of infection, while finding some ways to mitigate high-risk activities, such as overnight retreats.

Ways to mitigate the risk of infection and serious complications, especially with higher case counts:

- Wear masks.
- Eat outside if possible.
- Limit the number of people gathering.
- Optimize ventilation by keeping windows and doors open if possible. Use HEPA air filters.
- Stay up to date in your vaccinations, including boosters.
- Consider testing before larger gatherings or meeting with higher risk people. COVID-19 PCR tests are superior to COVID-19 (Home) Antigen tests, which have a higher rate of false negatives.



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Evangelical
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We leave you with this final thought:

²³ "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but not everything is constructive. ²⁴ No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

May God bless you and keep you safe,

ECC Covid Taskforce and the Executive Committee

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Update 7/11/2022 (all new changes are highlighted in blue)

Community Viral Level		●		●		●	
		Low Viral Activity		Moderate Viral Activity		High Viral Activity	
Individual Risk Category		Standard Risk	High Risk	Standard Risk	High Risk	Standard Risk	High Risk
Worship Service	Temperature/Symptoms	Check Required		Check Required		Check Required	
	In-Person Attendance	Encouraged		Encouraged	Optional	Optional	Not Recommended
	Congregational Masking	Optional	Recommended	Required		Required	
	Physical Distancing	No		Optional	Recommended	Recommended if available	
Worship Facilitation	Worship Team Masking	Optional	*Recommended	*Recommended		Required	
	Worship Team Size	No limitations		9 or below (Based on space limitations)		4 or below (Based on space limitations)	
	Speakers Masking/Plexiglass	Optional	*Recommended	*Mask or Plexiglass		Mask or Plexiglass with negative test	
	Moderator Masking	Optional	Recommended	Required		Required	
	Choir Masking	Optional	Recommended	Required		No in-person choir	
Youth and Adult Sunday School Masking		Optional	Recommended	Required		Required Consider Online-Only	
Food at ECC Gatherings		Permitted (Indoors and outdoors)		Permitted only outdoors No indoor food service		Permitted only outdoors No indoor food service	
Baptism		Indoor or outdoor Submersion or sprinkling		Sprinkling indoors Submersion outdoors		Outdoor submersion only	
Children's Ministry	In-person CM	Encouraged		In-person/optional hybrid		In-person/optional hybrid	
	Masking	Optional (Follows public school policies)		Required		Required	
	Teacher Masking	Optional	†Recommended	Required	†Consider not teaching	Required	†Consider not teaching
Fellowship	Masking	Optional	Recommended	Recommended		Recommended Consider Online	
	Food	As planned		Consider food in outdoor venues only		Consider food in outdoor venues only	
	Overnight Retreat	Safe		Not recommended**		Unsafe/PCR test option***	
	Retreat Planning	All retreats must be planned with contingency plans and the possibility of last-minute cancellations and forfeiture of deposits.					

High-Risk Definition: People who are over the age of 65 and/or with chronic diseases (cancer, chronic kidney disease, chronic lung disease, uncontrolled diabetes, chronic liver disease, dementia, disabilities, certain heart diseases, HIV, or other immunocompromised states).

Standard-Risk Definition: All individuals outside of high-risk definitions. Please inquire of a healthcare professional if you are uncertain of your risk category.

*The speaker or worship leaders may facilitate worship without a mask/plexiglass if tested negative by a COVID-19 antigen test on the morning of the worship service.

†High-risk individuals should consider not serving in Children's Sunday School during moderate (or even low) viral activity.

**With the exception of Youth and Young Adult Retreats who are not at high risk

***Can consider holding overnight retreat with each participant testing negative with PCR 48-72 hours beforehand



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****Covid Community Level Updates:

For Snohomish County: <https://www.snohd.org/546/Local-Case-Counts>

For King County: <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/health/covid-19/data/community-level.aspx>

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