



Western North Carolina Conference

The United Methodist Church

COVID-19 Update for Local Churches – May 18, 2021

Follow Jesus, Make Disciples, Transform The World

[The CDC](#) and [Governor Cooper](#) have issued new guidance regarding masks, social distancing, and mass gathering limits for those who have been fully vaccinated.

In response, we offer these recommendations. One size does not fit all. **Decisions appropriate for your church setting should be made by a team of shared leadership.** Our vital churches are blessed with the presence of multiple generations, and regard for the vulnerable is crucial. Most services welcome children and youth, most of whom have not yet been offered a vaccine. Please bring your children's ministry team and your youth ministry team into your decision-making processes and protocols, in addition to your Trustees. We encourage your Transition Teams to collaborate and communicate well.

1. The Bishop and Cabinet remain committed to our biblical mandate to “love our neighbors as ourselves” and our Wesleyan call to “do no harm.” Ministry encompasses not only worship but also fellowship events, mission activities, study groups, and age-level gatherings. The well-being of our children, youth, and vulnerable populations still needs to be considered with love and care in all areas of congregational life. Please take into consideration those who cannot be vaccinated because of age and/or pre-existing conditions when establishing safety guidelines for your local church.
2. We encourage persons to be vaccinated and respect the fact that some cannot be vaccinated because they are immunocompromised.
3. **We believe it is appropriate for local churches to follow the CDC guidance and make mask wearing optional for those who have been fully vaccinated.** Fully vaccinated is defined as being two weeks after the last dose of the vaccine.
4. It is also very appropriate for **some churches to continue to require masks** for everyone knowing that some persons are not able to be vaccinated.
5. Making masks optional requires trust. Churches should consider providing **caution zones** where people who want to wear masks can do so.

6. We do encourage continuing to maintain **social distance of three to six feet** in between different households in indoor worship and fellowship activities.
7. CDC guidance also indicates that fully vaccinated persons can sing in a choral group. However, **wearing masks should be recommended for congregational singing**.
8. Food, snacks, and drinks should be served by **masked and gloved individuals**. Until the vaccination percentage increases, buffet lines are discouraged.
9. Please continue to use the [NC County Alert System](#) and [County Vaccination Percentage](#) in making decisions regarding masks, social distancing, and gathering limits.
10. The following graphic may also be helpful in making decisions for your local church and community.

Choosing Safer Activities

Accessible link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/participate-in-activities.html>

	Unvaccinated People	Examples of Activities	Fully Vaccinated People
		Outdoor	
Safest		Walk, run, wheelchair roll, or bike outdoors with members of your household	
		Attend a small, outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated family and friends	
		Attend a small, outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people	
Less Safe		Dine at an outdoor restaurant with friends from multiple households	
Least Safe		Attend a crowded, outdoor event, like a live performance, parade, or sports event	
		Indoor	
Less Safe		Visit a barber or hair salon	
		Go to an uncrowded, indoor shopping center or museum	
		Attend a small, indoor gathering of fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people from multiple households	
Least Safe		Go to an indoor movie theater	
		Attend a full-capacity worship service	
		Sing in an indoor chorus	
		Eat at an indoor restaurant or bar	
		Participate in an indoor, high intensity exercise class	

Get a COVID-19 vaccine

- Prevention measures not needed**
- Take prevention measures**
Wear a mask, stay 6 feet apart, and wash your hands.

- Safety levels assume the recommended prevention measures are followed, both by the individual and the venue (if applicable).
- CDC cannot provide the specific risk level for every activity in every community. It is important to consider your own personal situation and the risk to you, your family, and your community before venturing out.



cdc.gov/coronavirus

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