



North Carolina Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Re-Gathering Task Force Considerations for Re-Gathering—August 2021

The Re-Gathering Task Force has used the CDC guidelines and Governor Cooper's Executive Orders as the basis of our deliberations. As mask guidelines have changed, the task force offers these considerations for NC Synod congregations.

We strongly encourage that

- congregations follow the CDC guidelines for all to wear masks indoors. Even if you are vaccinated, the recommendation is to wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of Substantial or High transmission—which at this point is almost the entire state of North Carolina. [COVID Data Tracker—County View](#)
- congregations continue the practice of contact tracing.
- congregations support vaccination efforts.
- congregations communicate opportunities for vaccinations including the [At-Home Vaccination program](#) offered by the NCDHHS.

We strongly discourage

- any activities with food or drink indoors.
- singing indoors without masks.
- indoor gatherings not socially distanced (including the passing of the peace during worship).
- any activity where masks cannot be worn.

Consider communion distribution as worshippers are leaving and using individual servings.

The question, *Who are the least of these and most vulnerable?*, has been central to our work together. Currently, those who are at greatest risk are children who are not yet able to be vaccinated and those who are unvaccinated for whatever reason.

Considerations for Gathering Based on Your Context

- How are we caring for those at greatest risk?
- Who is in attendance? Your congregation could easily include people who are unvaccinated, including children.

- Where is the gathering? Indoors or outdoors?
- How long is the gathering? Might gatherings be of shorter duration?
- How many people are present?
- What is your mask policy when you gather?
- How might you encourage vaccination?
- Are you checking vaccinations?
- Will there be singing?
- Will there be food or drinks where people would need to take off their masks?

We recognize that there are trade-offs for safety. Prayerful consideration for the least of these is central. We are grateful for the leadership you provide your congregation and recognize that when it comes to re-gathering, we are not of one mind on how to do so safely. We continue to urge caution as we seek to do the right thing and recognize that central to all things is a desire to worship.