



**Clergy Call Summary  
July 13, 2021**

**Bishop Goff's Remarks**

Opening Prayer

1. **Certificates of Election** for your lay delegates were due April 15. If your church hasn't submitted them, please do so no later than **July 30**. This request is urgent because your [Certificate of Election](#) is the only way we can know who will represent your congregation at Convention. More importantly right now, it is the only way for a delegate from your congregation to be considered as a member of one of the committees of Convention (we can't appoint people we don't know about). It also provides the only way we can ensure that our committees represent the diversity of every kind in our Diocese.
2. **Fall Clergy Conference** will be Oct 18-20 at Shrine Mont. It will be for clergy, not spouses and lay professionals. It's important for us to have a chance to regather and reconnect, given that in October, it will have been two years since we met at Shrine Mont in person. Focus, in addition to important work of reconnecting, is learning skills for how to talk with other across disagreement, particularly how to talk about race.

**Updates on our COVID-19 response**

We are blessed to share continuing good news about the pandemic.

The Health Markers for the counties within our Diocese are good.

As of this morning, three counties are in the green zone, with less than one new infection per 100,00 people on a seven-day rolling average. (That is down from 10 counties in the green last month – a reminder that the situation remains fluid.)

All but one of the remaining counties are in the yellow zone, with between one and nine new infections.

The one outlier is in the orange zone, with between 10 and 24 new infections.

There are no counties in the red zone.

That means, as I said and wrote in May and reiterated on our call last month, that you are fully empowered to make decisions locally regarding when and where to gather for worship, when and how to share the bread of communion, when and how to continue outreach and education ministries, and when to allow staff to work from the church office. Clergy and vestries are making decisions that are right for their settings; it is far from one size fits all as we continue to emerge from the pandemic. You are doing good work. I have felt safe in every congregation and ministry I've visited since Easter, and it seems that others have as well. Well done, faithful people of God.

Unless there is a dramatic spike in infections or some other unexpected occurrence, we will continue in this manner, namely, you remain empowered to make decisions in and for your setting and I and our diocesan staff will support you as fully as we are able.

As we continue our journey toward the new normal, we must continue to exercise caution and care, particularly for those who are not vaccinated and for children under the age of 12 who cannot be vaccinated.

Last week, as you may have read, a summer camp gathering of 400 sixth through twelfth graders in Texas resulted in at least 125 new infections of COVID-19.

Also last week, a Baptist church retreat attended by 800 people led to at least 30 new infections. The Coronavirus is still active, still spreading, still causing illness and death. The Delta variant is particularly contagious.

We are also hearing about people in our Diocese who are fully vaccinated and asymptomatic, and who yet tested positive for COVID-19. The vaccine offers significant protection for those who are vaccinated – and they might contract the virus and convey it to others.

So please continue your faithfulness and vigilance for the sake of everyone who is not vaccinated – particularly the children who come to worship and the children and grandchildren of those who come to worship.

#### **Regarding sharing the common cup of wine at communion**

I have not yet read or heard clear scientific evidence that the virus cannot be spread by drinking from a common cup. I have also not read or heard clear evidence that it can be spread in that way. In this area of uncertainty, where we have neither clarity nor confidence, I ask you to continue to refrain from sharing the common cup, as well as from breaking and sharing a common loaf of bread.

You may continue to experiment with ways to share communion that don't require people to drink or intinct from a common cup. Should you choose to consider this, please think carefully through three things:

- How might wine be shared without potentially spreading the virus and harming the vulnerable?
- How can wine be shared in a way that excludes no one?
- What does the particular manner of sharing wine say to the congregation about our eucharistic theology, about how Jesus is present, and about the nature of community?

I thank you for your faithfulness and love for God's people in this time of continuing emergence from pandemic. Thank you for your creativity as we figure out what God is calling the Church to be in our communities and in our world today. Please be kind and gentle with yourself in this challenging time. Be sure to take a day off. Be sure to take vacation time this summer. Never forget that God loves you fiercely and is holding you tight in the arms of never-ending love.

## **Q&A with Bishop Goff**

### ***We bought communion cup trays to distribute individual cups. Is that ok?***

If we do that, we must ask "how do we teach about that when our tradition is a common cup?" One way is to consecrate the wine in a common flagon or vessel then pour into individual cups, so we still have the common cup coming from the altar. Think through how you'll talk about the theology with your parishioners.

### ***What if the priest in charge and senior warden don't agree on safety measures for worship?***

You as the rector, vicar or priest in charge have the ultimate authority. If it helps to talk with a bishop, Canon to the Ordinary, a dean, or colleagues, I urge you to reach out.

### ***What are we learning about the latest science regarding singing and masks?***

There is no new information from the CDC right now. Use your best judgement. You may require people to be masked indoors. More congregations are singing outdoors. Indoors is still risky. We still have congregations that only use a small choir. Most are still requiring masks while singing indoors.

**Where do we stand on the hiring of Missioner for Racial Justice and Healing?** Interviews of five finalists begin tomorrow. We are hoping to extend an invitation to the final candidate in early August. That person's start date will depend upon their availability to start.

### **Is there risk involved in minister using a common loaf of bread?**

If it is only one person breaking it or touching it, having wash hands before, that could be workable. Wafers, by contrast, allow for no-touch delivery.

### ***Should we still ask folks to sign up for contact tracing if attending services/funerals?***

That is an option but not considered necessary under the current conditions.

### ***What if I have one person who refuses to get vaccine or wear a mask?***

The biggest danger is to that person themselves or to others who are not vaccinated. If the entire congregation remains outdoors, the risk is less.

**Reminder: There are people who are not able to receive vaccines due to medical issues or allergies.**

Whatever the reason for not receiving the vaccine, we honor that and don't want to leave people out.

***What about people intincting from common cup?*** Research even before COVID shows that intinction can spread infections even more than drinking from the common cup. It's not a good idea. One option: A priest can intinct for the people and place in their hand. It is not advised to place on the tongue.

***What about protocols for Sunday school, preschools and nursery schools?***

Be in touch with local health dept to see what their recommendations are. Learn about what your local school district and other parishes are doing to keep people safe. Remember: Children under 12 are not yet able to be vaccinated.

***What about communicants sanitizing hands before receiving communion?***

Some churches have ushers available to dispense sanitizer as the people come to the rail. People seem to like the extra layer of protection that offers.

***Public schools have been directed to make non-discrimination policies regarding transgender students, respect their dignity, and guarantee full participation. Does the Diocese have an updated statement since 2017?***

The policy and guidelines the bishops developed and that were adopted at Diocesan Convention in 2017 remain in effect. We will reissue them this summer in a communication from the bishops.