

Dear Siblings in Christ,

As you may be aware, last month, Bishop Poulson presented a plan to begin a phased step-down of the COVID-19 protocols for the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma. The new protocols were to begin on Pentecost, May 23, and would conclude on July 17th. Due to the recent updates from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) last Friday, May 14th, and the increasing rates of vaccination, Bishop Poulson has revised the previous timeline of the diocesan protocols. He states the following: "As of Pentecost Sunday, May 23, I am leaving all decisions about COVID restrictions to our congregations and their clergy and lay leaders. I urge all those eligible to be vaccinated, to do so."

In consultation with the Reopening Committee, it's been agreed upon to lift most of the restrictions put in place in March 2020 to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This means that social distancing, face masks, and indoor eating restrictions will be lifted, effective immediately. We will continue the practice of the clergy dispensing communion bread with tongs. They will also intinct the bread with communion wine, at your discretion. These changes are consistent with the most recent CDC guidelines for vaccinated people. We encourage the use of masks for anyone who would like to continue wearing one. Anyone with pre-existing illness or who are immunocompromised are also encouraged to wear a mask. Hand sanitizing stations and masks will continue to be available for anyone who would like to use them.

May I take this opportunity, to once again thank Amy Smith, and the members of the Reopening Committee, and you--the members of St. Augustine's--for your prayers and patience as we have traversed through these long and sometimes trying 14 months. Like so many of you, I look forward to the revitalization of our parish and welcoming a new sense of normalcy.

I am aware that we still need to be cautious and vigilant as we look with optimism to the future. At this point, we need to be steadfast in our prayers that those in the positions of power will find effective ways to facilitate the vaccination of our siblings around the world who continue to suffer from COVID-19. With that in mind, I strongly encourage all those who are eligible and interested in being vaccinated, to do so. If you or you know someone who needs help finding a place to receive a jab, please don't hesitate to contact the church office.

Blessings,

Fr. Joseph+