



Aggressive Omicron variant prompts updated COVID-19 guidance for local churches

In response to the [emergence](#) of the highly contagious Omicron variant, Bishop Holston and leaders of the South Carolina Conference have updated our [COVID-19 Best Practices](#). Local churches are strongly encouraged to review their current practices to ensure the health and safety of all.

In the tradition of John Wesley, who believed in the value of science and medicine, Bishop Holston affirms the following guidance for in-person worship and other gatherings, compiled by a team of South Carolina United Methodist pastors and laity:

- All eligible persons – anyone age 5 and older – are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated and to receive a booster shot as soon as possible.
- Everyone should wear masks at all times when indoors – including choirs and those waiting to receive communion.
- Everyone should practice social distancing when indoors – including while waiting to receive communion.
- Local churches should hold events outdoors, including drive-up services, whenever possible. Outdoors is always safer than indoors.
- Please remember, persons 65 and older and those with weak immune systems due to health conditions are more susceptible to COVID-19, even when vaccinated. Everyone is encouraged to wear masks out of respect and love for them.

Local churches are strongly urged to continue to follow the latest guidance from the State [Department of Health and Environmental Control](#), as they make the health and safety of their congregations and communities their top priority.

Bishop Holston and conference leaders recognize that there are differences of opinion in many congregations about the best way to respond to COVID-19. We urge patience and understanding as we continue to seek the best ways to serve God and one another together.