



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MONTANA

THE RT. REV. MARTY STEBBINS, BISHOP

Date: 7 January 2021
To: Priests-In-Charge and Senior Wardens
Subject: COVID-19 Mask Mandate for Episcopal Congregations

Dear All,

Governor Gianforte has stated that the state-imposed mask mandate will be lifted in the upcoming weeks. The Episcopal Church in Montana has strived to work with the county public health officials and their mandates in order to protect our congregations, our clergy and the broader communities in which each serves. While Gov. Gianforte is opening the vaccine opportunities by combining the CDC recommended rollouts of COVID-19 vaccinations, there is not enough vaccine available at the moment to protect our more vulnerable population. It also takes approximately 2 weeks after the second vaccination for a person to achieve the expected immunity. This means that an insufficient percentage of Montanans will be protected for many more weeks.

Some counties do not have their own mask mandates or are choosing to not enforce them. In order to continue to protect our people, **I am requiring a mask to be worn over the nose and mouth by everyone the age of five years old and older when on any Episcopal property until such time as I lift this mandate.** All other requirements, such as physical distancing, hand sanitizers and sanitizing of the physical plant also remain in place. My hope is that by Easter, I will be able to lift much of this. The end of the pandemic does appear to be in sight, but it is not here yet. Please remain vigilant and get your COVID-19 vaccine when it is available to you.

Peace and Light,

Bishop Marty