



The Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania

*“O my strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress,
the God who shows me steadfast love.” (Psalm 59:17)*

Updated Protocols on Singing and Ventilation

My siblings in Christ,

Lifting our voice in prayer and praise can play a central role in our worship. It has therefore been with the utmost reluctance that I have restricted it. In order to best guide and support our churches, the staff and I are continually reviewing the latest science. In August a significant [study on the performing arts](#) released its preliminary findings. After careful consideration and conversation with church musicians, the Clergy Health Committee and HVAC specialists, I have concluded that it is reasonable to allow churches to expand the role of singing under very specific conditions.

As with all of our loosening of restrictions, this is entirely optional and no church should feel pressured to do so. And as I have said before, the safest option is not to take the risk at all. Therefore, churches should carefully consider their capacity to take this on before proceeding. If a church feels both called and prepared to implement these protocols, they should first notify me via email, (copying Canons Wamsley and Berlenbach) so that I might review their plans.

Effective September 20th, churches may expand their choral singing in accordance with the following conditions:

- 1) Masks must be worn at all times and meet criteria for both fit and filtration. Please see the Appendix for specific guidance.
- 2) 10 ft spacing between singers. Each singer should stand in the middle of a 10x10 square, with everyone facing forward in rows (no curves or semi-circles). This will determine the maximum number of singers that can be present in any given space.
- 3) 30 min time limit. After 30 minutes, a minimum of a 20-minute break from singing must be observed before beginning again in the same space. Alternatively, the rehearsal may move to an entirely separate location. Since the average hymn/anthem is 3-4 minutes and there are long breaks in the service before the next piece is sung, this should not have an effect on worship with the possible exception of a sung/choral mass.

- 4) Outdoor singing (with masks and 10ft spacing) may commence as soon as the church receives permission. Canopies may be used if necessary but not if they have sides that restrict air flow.
- 5) Expansion of indoor singing is dependent upon sufficient ventilation. Doors and windows should be open and fans used to increase flow and circulation. Fresh air drawn from the outside and then exhausted out the opposite side of the room is best. If this is not possible, air must be fully circulated and changed at least three times or more per hour. Depending on the room, portable air changers may also be introduced. Whenever possible, filtration methods such a HEPA or MERV13 should be used. If your system cannot accommodate those types of filters then please consult a professional to determine the next best type. Links to a circulation calculator and additional information can be found in the Appendix.
Prior to commencing expanded singing indoors, a church first must review the ventilation of the proposed space(s) in which singing would take place and, if it proves sufficient, certify this in writing to the Bishop.
- 6) If ventilation cannot be increased to necessary levels, masked singers may reduce their distance from 27 ft to 10 feet but remained capped in number at 4. They are still subject to the 30-minute time limit and all other conditions of these protocols.
- 7) For now, and consistent with the restrictions on children's ministries, youth 13 and older may participate in choral singing under the same protocols that [govern youth activity in Phase III](#). For children 12 and younger, intergenerational choirs may be considered, but each child must have a parent or guardian taking part with them.
- 8) As before, singers count towards the total occupancy in terms of worship capacity.
- 9) All other previous protocols, including the need to avoid physical contact, sanitize spaces after usage, etc., remain in effect.
- 10) Congregational singing remains prohibited.

Additional resources which detail the study findings, recommendations on ventilation, and specific guidance on masks can be found in the Appendix at the end of this letter.

Considerations of singing aside, it is critical for all churches to understand the importance of maximizing ventilation. We are increasingly understanding that the virus is transmitted via aerosol droplets produced when breathing, speaking or singing. I strongly encourage every church to read and implement the recommendations found in #5 above.

As I have said before, our journey through this pandemic is long. I pray that these updates represent a milestone of progress. The day will come when we will all be able to lift our voice in songs of praise. What a beautiful glorious day that will be. In the meantime, we continue to journey together, strong in our faith and in our love for one another. Most of all we have Jesus Christ and it is his love that makes music resound in our hearts and resonate in our souls.

In Christ,

Appendix: Links and Resources

Study:

More information from the Performing Arts Study may be found [here](#).

Ventilation:

A tool to help calculate rates of circulation for your own particular spaces can be found [here](#).

The original calculator from Harvard and the University of Colorado, cannot be used to make those calculations but contains instructions and other helpful information can be found [here](#).

The Wall Street Journal recently published a helpful article on ventilation but it is behind a paywall. If you are a subscriber you can find it [here](#)

Masks

It is recommended that for all singer's masks meet ASTM Level 3 standards (see below).

This includes the following characteristics:

Multi-layer, surgical style, and either washable or disposable after each use.

Completely cover the nose and snugly fit the contours of the face – for example, medical grade masks with no gaps that fit tightly around the edges. One way to evaluate a mask's effectiveness: does it leave an outline on your face when it is removed?

Most singers will need two types of masks: one for general use, and one specifically for singing.

To date we have identified three masks specifically for singers. But as they have not been independently tested, we cannot endorse any of them. They can be found [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

The RH-N95 System decontaminates N95 respirator masks as well as ASTM level 1-3 respirator masks for Multiple Use.

ASTM PERFORMANCE LEVELS	MAXIMUM FILTRATION	N95	Indicated for use when treating patients with airborne diseases such as TB or influenza.* <i>Meets CE 0121 – In reference to EN 149:2001 FFP2 NR.</i>	
	NIOSH Approved N95 Particulate Respirator High Fluid Resistance 160 mmHg Filtration Efficiency PFE = 99.9% @ 0.1 micron Breathability - Delta P > 5.0 mm H ₂ O/cm ² Flame Spread Class 1	N95		Pictured: Isolator Plus™ N95 Particulate Respirator
	ASTM LEVEL 3 High Fluid Resistance 160 mmHg Filtration Efficiency BFE ≥ 98% PFE ≥ 98% @ 0.1 micron Breathability - Delta P < 5.0 mm H ₂ O/cm ² Flame Spread Class 1	LEVEL 3	Ideal for procedures where heavy to moderate amounts of fluid, spray and/or aerosols are produced. <i>Meets EN14683 Rating – Type IIR Standard.</i>	Pictured: Ultra® Sensitive Earloop with Secure Fit® Mask Technology
	ASTM LEVEL 2 Moderate Fluid Resistance 120 mmHg Filtration Efficiency BFE ≥ 98% PFE ≥ 98% @ 0.1 micron Breathability - Delta P < 5.0 mm H ₂ O/cm ² Flame Spread Class 1	LEVEL 2	Ideal for procedures where moderate to light amounts of fluid, spray and/or aerosols are produced. <i>Meets EN14683 Rating – Type IIR Standard.</i>	Pictured: Procedural Earloop with Secure Fit® Mask Technology
	ASTM LEVEL 1 Low Fluid Resistance 80 mmHg Filtration Efficiency BFE ≥ 95% PFE ≥ 95% @ 0.1 micron Breathability - Delta P < 4.0 mm H ₂ O/cm ² Flame Spread Class 1	LEVEL 1	Ideal for procedures where low amounts of fluid, spray and/or aerosols are produced. <i>Meets EN14683 Rating – Type II Standard.</i>	Pictured: Isofluid® Earloop with Secure Fit® Mask Technology