

The Diocese of Southern Ohio

Guidelines for singing during COVID-19

September 22, 2020

Singing spreads the novel coronavirus more than speaking¹. As a result, extreme caution should be exercised when singing in choral and congregational settings. The following guidelines do not eliminate risk but provide some best practices to decrease it based on what we currently know².

The colors correspond to Ohio pandemic alert levels. Note that whenever maximum numbers are given, they presume adequate distancing; no more singers should be used than can meet the other criteria, even if that number is lower than the maximum number cited.

¹Some recent research funded by the U.K. government, however, suggests that singing is actually no worse than speaking. The relevant issues are, according to this study, are volume and duration for both singing and speaking.

²These guidelines are based, in large part, on recommendations given in “Safer Singing During the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic: What We Know and What We Don’t” in the Voice Foundation’s Journal of Voice ([https://www.jvoice.org/article/S0892-1997\(20\)30245-9/fulltext](https://www.jvoice.org/article/S0892-1997(20)30245-9/fulltext)).

Ohio Public Health Advisory System

Level 1 Public Emergency: active exposure and spread.

Yellow

Level 2 Public Emergency: increased exposure and spread. Exercise high degree of caution.

Orange

Level 3 Public Emergency: very high exposure and spread. Limit activities as much as possible.

Red

Level 4 Public Emergency: severe exposure and spread. Only leave home for supplies and services.

Purple

Ohio alert level	Choral/cantor singing	Congregational singing
	No singing	No singing
	Worship Outside <ul style="list-style-type: none">Up to 8 singersMasksAt least 10 feet apartAt least 20 feet from congregation Inside <ul style="list-style-type: none">Streamed/recorded with no congregationUp to four singersMasksAt least 10 feet apart Rehearsal <ul style="list-style-type: none">No more than eight singers at a timeMasksNo more than 30 minutes in a spaceAt least 10 feet apart	No singing

Ohio alert level	Choral/cantor singing	Congregational singing
	<p>Worship <i>Outside</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 16 singers• Masks• At least 10 feet apart• At least 20 feet from congregation <p>Inside (with congregation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 12 singers• Masks• At least 10 feet apart• Plexi-glass shields preferred• At least 30 feet from congregation <p>Rehearsal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No more than 16 singers at a time• Masks• No more than 30 minutes in a space• At least 10 feet apart	<p>Worship <i>Outside</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quiet singing• Masks• At least 8 feet apart• <p>Inside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No singing
	<p>Worship <i>Inside (with congregation)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Up to 24 singers• Masks• At least 10 feet apart• At least 20 feet from congregation <p>Rehearsal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No more than 24 singers at a time• Masks• No more than 30 minutes in a space• At least 10 feet apart	<p>Worship <i>Inside</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quiet singing• Masks• At least 10 feet apart

NOTE:

- Per diocesan guidelines, maximum occupancy (clergy, choir, and congregation combined) should be limited to 50% of the building's fire code occupancy.
- Worship services should be limited to one hour or less.
- Persons in high risk categories are advised against participating in any ensemble singing.



At any alert level, the following practices should be observed:

Screening

- Before attending a rehearsal or liturgy, a singer should do a self-screening
- If the singer has a fever or any of the common COVID symptoms:
 - Stay home
 - Contact health care provider

Rehearsal spaces

- When possible, rehearse outside
- Use only rooms with good air ventilation systems and keep as many doors/windows open as possible
- Rehearse in any given space for no longer than 30 minutes
- Avoid congregating in any area, such as around music boxes

Rehearsal style

- Sing quietly whenever possible
- Director should give verbal directions rather than singing whenever possible
- Avoid any warmups that involve contact with other people or contact with the face

Masks

- Wear face masks at all times
- Masks that do not touch the lips work well for singing as they allow for clear articulation

Plexi-glass shields

- Shields should be several feet from the singer
- Shields should ideally surround the singer on three sides to provide some separation between singers as well as between singers and congregation

Hygiene

- Avoid any direct contact with other people
- Wash/disinfect hands before, during, and after rehearsals
- Avoid touching the face and eyes
- Maintain six feet of distance when not singing



Disinfecting

- Disinfect surfaces between rehearsals/liturgies
 - Chairs, instruments, music stands, etc.

Contact tracing

- Record contact tracing information for anyone in attendance
- If a member of the group tests positive for COVID-19, make appropriate notifications to anyone who has been in the same space as that person

Sheet music and other items

- Do not share sheet music
- Instead of having singers pick up scores from a pile, have one person distribute them in advance
- Do not share folders
- Do not share pencils

Vesting

- Do not share vestments
- Store vestments in such a way that each singer can retrieve theirs without touching other vestments
- Vest in well-ventilated areas and keep doors open
- No more people in the room than can always maintain six feet of distance

Food/drink

- Do not share food
- Drink water from bottles filled with a water filler, not directly from a drinking fountain

Resources

Diocesan Guidelines

- Visit <https://episcopaliansinconnection.org/doing-church-during-covid-19/> for additional guidelines on safe worship practices during the pandemic.
- Further information is available in the Diocese of Southern Ohio Phased Return to Increasing In-Person Parish Life at https://episcopaliansinconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-Response_Phased-Return-FINAL-FINAL.pdf.

Government Guidelines

- To see current alert levels in all counties visit the Ohio Public Health Advisory System at <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/public-health-advisory-system/>.

Masks

- Masks that do not touch the lips allow for clear articulation in singing. Examples include:
 - The Singer's Mask (Broadway Relief Project) – <https://www.broadwayreliefproject.com/singers-mask>
 - 3M™ Particulate Respirator 8200/07023(AAD) – https://www.3m.com/3M/en_US/company-us/all-3m-products/~/3M-Particulate-Respirator-8200-07023-AAD-N95-160-EA-Case/?N=5002385+3294780149&rt=rud

Plexi-glass shields

- Shields that enclose the singer on three sides allow for a barrier between singers as well as between singers and congregation. Examples include:
 - Pennzoni Display Company DS65 Drum Shield – <https://www.pennzonidisplay.com/ds6six-2ftx6ftpanelsdrumshields-3.aspx>



Questions regarding the diocesan guidelines for singing during COVID-19 may be directed to Stephan Casurella, Canon Precentor and Director of Music, Christ Church Cathedral, at scasurella@cccath.org.