



This time last year, many of us were trying to figure out how to celebrate the Spring holidays of Easter and Passover in a safe way. Many houses of worship cancelled in-person gatherings, and families struggled to modify long-held traditions to stay safe.

Almost a year has passed, and COVID-19 is still a risk to our community. The good news is that many of us that are over 65 have been vaccinated, lowering our personal risk of becoming sick. But there are many who are still not vaccinated, and new variants of the virus are circulating. **It will be wise for us to not let down our guard.**

Pamlico County	April 11, 2020	March 1, 2021
Total COVID-19 Cases identified	6	962
Number of Currently Active Cases	3	21

While the number of COVID-19 cases is declining overall in North Carolina, we are not seeing a similar decrease in Pamlico County. Our case rate is remaining fairly steady at 5-7 per day. Celebrating Easter and Passover at home or in smaller groups can help the entire community bring this virus under control.

Should I attend worship services?

Multiple studies have shown that coronavirus transmission happens easily when you have one or more of these situations: prolonged **contact** (more than 15 min) with infected person(s), in **closed** (poorly ventilated) and **crowded** spaces. Church services can include all of these situations. If you feel that you must attend a worship service, find out how the services are being conducted:

- Outdoors is better than inside
- Limiting the number of people to 10 or less in the same room, all of whom keep their distance from each other and wear masks, is safer than higher numbers and not wearing masks
- Group singing and loud speaking should be limited to minimize aerosol transmission
- The service should be as brief as possible.

See our [CCTF newsletter on this topic](#) for more information.

How can our family celebrate safely?

Easter and Passover are often celebrated with large family gatherings. First and foremost, **if someone in the group is in a high risk group and has not been vaccinated**, it is recommended that you **seriously consider the importance of gathering vs. the risk of COVID**.

If you do decide to get together with others not in your household, be sure to follow the 3 W's and the 3C's. **Wear** a mask, **Wait** 6 feet apart, and **Wash** your hands frequently. Avoid **closed** spaces with poor ventilation, **crowded** places, and close **contact** settings.

Things which can help reduce the risk include: getting together outside, keeping the gathering as small as possible, wearing masks, arranging people from different households 6 feet apart, staying 6 feet apart, especially while eating and drinking, and but avoiding self-serve food. Bring your own food and utensils. The NC Department of Health & Human Services has guidance for get-togethers here:

<https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/information/individuals-families-and-communities/guidelines-get-togethers>

What if I have been vaccinated? Can we celebrate as usual?

The answer to this question depends on the vaccination status of those attending.

- **If you have been vaccinated, but some of your family and friends have not.**
 - You should continue to follow the 3 Ws: wear a mask, wash your hands frequently, and wait at least six feet away from other people.
 - You should continue to consider gathering with just the members of your household.
 - While the vaccination will protect you from becoming seriously ill with COVID-19, it is possible that you may still be able to carry the virus in your nose and respiratory system and transmit to other people
- **If you and your close family and friends have all been vaccinated.**
 - Continue to follow the 3 Ws, as you all may still be able to carry the virus and transmit it to others.
 - Give the vaccination time to work: each person in your group should allow one to two weeks after the second shot for the body to develop antibodies. But remember, the protective response to the vaccine may vary between individuals.
 - If your entire group of family / friends have all gotten the full vaccine regimen and *at least* a week has passed since the second shot for every person, it probably is okay for you to get together with them in a closed setting, where you're not interacting with the public. So feel free to hang out together at home or a vacation rental, but be cautious about going out into larger public groups. And don't forget the 3 Ws when you are out in public.
 - Vaccines are quite effective, but not 100% - there is still a small possibility that a vaccinated person could still develop asymptomatic or very mild COVID-19 illness. Although the vaccines are very good at preventing the severe symptoms that land people in the hospital, experts can't rule out the possibility that you'll develop milder symptoms, which could conceivably turn chronic or "long-haul." There's also a chance

that one of your vaccinated friends might transmit the virus to you. There is on-going research focusing on whether vaccinated people can still transmit the virus.

I am a faith leader; how should our place of worship conduct services this year?

The CCTF team developed these [guidelines](#) to help churches make decisions about whether and how to conduct services. Members of the CCTF team would be happy to participate in an online meeting with any church leaders who would like to have a conversation about this topic.

North Carolina updated their Guidance for Places of Worship & Religious Services on February 26 and this guidance is available here: <https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/guidance/NCDHHS-Interim-Guidance-for-Places-of-Worship.pdf>

The state has also developed a “faith leaders toolkit” available here:

<https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/information/individuals-families-and-communities/faith-leaders>

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References:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>

<https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/22219362/end-of-covid-19-pandemic-social-distancing-masking>



The COVID-19 Community Task Force (CCTF) is a volunteer organization established to engage the community in responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic and to support and augment the County's efforts. The information shared by the CCTF is not an official communication from Pamlico County, its Health Department or the Pamlico County COVID19 Task Force.