

Dear Friends,

August 13, 2021

After much debate last night, the Church Council voted to once again require the wearing of face masks for everyone coming into the church building. Earlier in July we had been hoping to do away with most requirements in August, but the spike in the Coronavirus Delta variant infection rates in Ozaukee County have led us to change our plans. This means that we will need to wear masks in worship from now until at least the next Church Council meeting on September 9th when the Council will look at our requirements once again. We hope that this "Fourth Wave" of infections will be receding and that we may be able to lift most restrictions at that time.

I bring this news to all of you knowing that there is a growing frustration with all things Coronavirus related. I had been hoping and praying for an opportunity to begin a more "normal" Sunday morning worship with all of you. Going back to a mask requirement is all the more frustrating because the end of the pandemic seemed in sight this summer when the infection rate for our county was way down. We all hoped that the advent of vaccines would bring the pandemic to a close, but the Delta variant, the plateau of new vaccinations to just over half the population and perhaps letting our guard down too soon has led to a new spike in infections.

None of us are qualified epidemiologists, so we are following the current recommendations of the Center for Disease Control that recommend wearing masks for both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals when gathering indoors in groups. This recommendation has come after new evidence suggests: 1) that the Delta variant is more highly infectious than the previous versions, 2) that even those who have been vaccinated may be able to transmit the virus and spread infections without showing any symptoms and 3) that there are "breakthrough" cases of those who are fully vaccinated becoming sick.

Vaccination is still the best way to fight the Delta variant of Coronavirus; the vaccine is highly effective. And while wearing masks is not a perfect solution, it can slow the spread of infection and minimize the risk of spreading the infection to friends, family, and fellow worshipers. Wearing a mask is an inconvenience, but it isn't the end of the world. Mask requirements are frustrating, but they are not going to last forever. Let's all remember that we are people of faith and have been through "wilderness times" before. We will persevere and get over this present hurdle. Church Council will be meeting again on September 9th and will be able to review the current situation and make necessary changes.

This morning I read the following article from the Atlantic "How the Pandemic Now Ends" and found it to be thoughtful, non-alarmist and a good summary of where we are today in the battle with this pandemic. I recommend it for your reading:

https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2021/08/delta-has-changed-pandemic-endgame/619726/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=atlantic-daily-newsletter&utm_content=20210812&silverid=%25%25RECIPIENT_ID%25%25&utm_term=The%20Atlantic%20Daily

Courage and Peace,
Pastor Scott