



**First Congregational  
Church**  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Rev. Jeffrey Hubers, Senior Minister

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Blessings in the Name of the Jesus:

Though this summer has been a refreshing time of community and reclaiming semblances of normalcy, COVID-19 continues to threaten our world. Even with the safety afforded by vaccinations, the developing variants of the virus are increasing hospitalizations and cases throughout the nation, particularly among unvaccinated populations. Numbers are beginning to rise in our area, and the data points towards concern. Church Council has decided to follow the CDC's latest recommendation and ask that all those participating for Sunday worship wear masks, regardless of vaccination status, while indoors.

This is a request, not a mandate – it comes on behalf of church leadership as a consideration of those worshiping that are not vaccinated and as a way to prevent further spread of variants in our area. No other protocols or practices have changed – other than asking for masks, worship and other areas of congregational life will proceed as normal.

This change in advice from the CDC results from studies of the Delta variant transmission that it is possible for vaccinated people to carry the virus even though they are not sick themselves and to spread the virus, especially to unvaccinated people. We have a significant number of unvaccinated people in our congregation, especially considering children under age 12 do not have the opportunity to be vaccinated. Church Council feels our obligation as a community of faith and a center for substantial, indoor activity is to make sure that people are informed of the best scientific advice available for protecting one another. As such, we should accept the responsibility of doing everything we can to lessen the impact of this pandemic on our neighbors.

Church Council has made it known from the beginning that changes to our practice are always possible if warranted by renewed warnings in order to uphold our value of life and love for one another. This is a reminder that we are proceeding under the umbrella of hope and trust. No one is going to be stopped at the doors for how they follow the recommendations. May Christ's love and the lessons of His hospitality guide our responses.

It's been a long journey, and this may feel in some ways as a defeat, but it's simply a call for perseverance. The virus is not over, and the fight continues. We pray for strength and courage on this journey. We pray we trust in Jesus and His Way of God's Kingdom – the way of self-giving love, the path of suffering for the sake of others, and trusting in God to complete our journeys for peace and redemption. As always, please direct any questions or concerns to members of Church Council.

May the grace of Jesus Christ abide with us all and give us strength to proceed together in faith.

- FCC Church Council