



First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

2001 Niles Avenue, St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Phone: (269) 983-5519

Fax: (269) 983-5988

Website: www.fccstjoseph.org

Email: office@fccstjoseph.org

Rev. Jeffrey Hubers, Senior Minister

12/13/2021

Blessings in the Name of the Jesus:

It's been quite a year, and despite the excitement of the holiday season, COVID remains a threat in our region and 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. [Our regional hospital system](#) has shared the [following concerns](#) over its maxed-capacity, staffing fatigue, and area positivity levels.

Church Council asks that all those participating for Sunday worship and other indoor, church activities to wear masks, regardless of vaccination status. This request from church leadership is in respect for the ongoing sacrifice of healthcare workers and as a way to prevent further spread of variants in our area. Church Council feels our obligation as a community of faith and a center for substantial, indoor activity is to accept the responsibility of doing everything we can to lessen the impact of this pandemic on our neighbors.

Please wear a mask when gathering with others in the church building. 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. Masking, social distancing, vaccination, and good hygiene are our best defenses against the virus and keeping each other safe. May Christ's love and the lessons of His hospitality guide our responses.

Advent is a season of waiting and expectation. The longevity of the virus has certainly made waiting exhausting, draining our resilience. However, Advent reminds us that we wait not in vain, but in the *hope of Christ*. 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