

June 16, 2021

Dear WHLC Members and Friends:

As you know, we have received expert guidance throughout the pandemic from our dedicated Health Advisory Task Force. They met this week in light of several encouraging trends: COVID infection rates continue to drop, hospitalizations and deaths are down, and a fair number of people are fully vaccinated (with our church population being perhaps above average). Good changes are coming, so please read on.

At the same time, however, several causes for concern exist. The COVID risk level in Polk County remains at “medium.” We will feel better once the risk level falls to “low,” but we aren’t there quite yet. Basically the coronavirus is still out there, and you are at risk of contracting it if you are not vaccinated.

There is also some concern about the Delta variant that caused severe problems in India and is now the most common variant in the UK. It is expected to be the most common variant in the United States soon. Friends, this is all the more reason to get fully vaccinated if you have not yet done so.

In light of all these factors, we are adopting the following changes immediately (as of 6/16):

- Wearing a mask at church is now optional. Of course, we strongly encourage you to do so if you are not vaccinated.
- Physical distancing will remain in effect in the sanctuary for now. Essentially this means people are seated in every other pew. We will continue having two services on Sundays to give people room to spread out.
- Wine will again be offered for intinction. Remember, if you are uncomfortable with this, there is no such thing as partial communion. Receiving only the wafer is the real deal.
- Fellowship between services is moving back to Crabtree Parish Hall. And donuts are back! We will no longer facilitate the online coffee hour.
- If you are immunocompromised or for any reason uncomfortable gathering in a larger group, the service will continue to be fed live to the AV system in Parish Hall, and you are welcome to participate in that location (and communion will be brought to you). Of course, the livestream will continue to be an option every Sunday, always accessible at [www.whlc.org](http://www.whlc.org) or on our Facebook page.
- As previously planned, outdoor worship will continue for the next two Saturdays (6/19 & 26) at 5:30 p.m. before moving back indoors on July 3.

Many, many thanks to the Health Advisory Team for their dedication to keeping members and guests of our congregation safe. Team members, Pastor Robin, and I all strongly encourage you to get vaccinated as soon as possible. With just under 50% of Polk County fully vaccinated, we have not attained herd immunity. Vaccination is the best path toward the “normal” we all desire. Do it for yourself. Do it for your neighbor.

Be at peace, beloved. Christ is with us!

Pastor Chris