

The WHLC Health Advisory Task Force met on August 17 to review our current COVID protocols. As you know, case numbers are surging again. Vaccination provides excellent protection against serious illness and death, but breakthrough infections are happening. At least two fully vaccinated members of WHLC recently experienced breakthrough infections. Children under 12 are not yet able to be vaccinated. Fully vaccinated individuals can transmit the Delta variant, even if they have no symptoms.

In light of these realities, the team recommends the following changes to our protocols for the next month:

- Mask use indoors is encouraged, even for those who are vaccinated. This is in keeping with CDC and Polk County Health Department guidance.
- Fellowship time between services will continue in Parish Hall, but without coffee and donuts. The potential for spreading the virus through food is not a big concern, but rather the fact that masks need to be removed while eating and drinking.
- Groups (WELCA, Men's Bible Study, Quilting, etc.) are welcome to continue meeting in person and decide what precautions they wish to take. Please do take time to discuss this as a group and try to find a way to meet that enables as many people to participate comfortably as possible. If you decide to go back online for a while, let church staff know how we can help you with the technology.
- Wednesday evening activities are scheduled to begin on September 15, *without the community meal at 5:30*. Children's and Confirmation ministries will resume with masking encouraged. Each musical ensemble is developing protocols for rehearsing safely.

Essentially what's changed is that we are asking you to wear a mask indoors until we have a clearer picture of the threat posed by the Delta variant. Even if you are not concerned about the risk of infection to yourself, please do it as an act of love for others, who may have vulnerabilities you're not aware of. **It's really not that hard.** Remember the counsel of St. Paul: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:3-4). And let us be at peace.