

The New CDC Guidelines And What they Mean At Carmel UMC

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This last week the CDC updated recommendations that fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear masks or physically distance in either indoor or outdoor settings. Last night our Church Council wrestled with how to move forward with these recommendations in the most faithful and helpful way possible. Like other congregations, we've have done our best up to this point to follow the CDC guidelines, and so that's what we've decided to do moving forward as well.

Beginning this weekend, **masks will optional in worship and adult programs**. The CDC has indicated that the chances of a fully vaccinated person contracting COVID are very low, and if they do, chances of having a life-threatening case of it, are negligible. **If you are unvaccinated then you need to continue to wear a mask inside the church building at all times**. No one who follows Jesus would want to risk infecting others, nor would we want you to risk being infected yourself, so in the meantime, please remain masked.

And yet, even for those who are fully vaccinated, we would ask you to bring a mask with you to all church functions, especially worship. There may still be situations that arise in the life of our church in which wearing a mask will lower risk for those who have not yet been able to get vaccinated, especially youth and children. If you have any desire to interact with the children or youth of the congregation before or after worship or dropping your children off and picking them up, wearing a mask protects those who've worked hard to keep their children safe these last 15 months.

In the meantime, some are not yet comfortable in public without masks, and some have yet to be vaccinated, so while masks are optional, we encourage you to be gracious to one another. Our pastors and staff will continue to wear masks when interacting with worshippers and serving communion. I will continue to wear my mask while in worship except when leading or preaching from the front. I will also continue to wear a mask while greeting you and your guests before and after worship for the time being.

Recognizing that most children have not yet been vaccinated, we will be consistent with the Carmel schools' Covid policy in our student and children's ministries, and require masks for staff, volunteers, and kindergarteners and older in our ministries until the school district changes its policies. This will include our summer activities unless further changes by the schools are made before then.

We aren't completely out of the woods yet so remember:

- If you feel sick don't come in.
- We are trusting you to wear a mask at all times if you have **not** been vaccinated.
- Wear a mask if you have been vaccinated if you want to.
- Continue to wash your hands; to shake or not to shake hands is up to you.
- If you are going to interact with children or youth wear a mask.
- Be patient and gracious with one another, assume the best intentions of others.

- Continue to pray for the leadership of your church. This is unprecedented for all of us, and we are charged with not just doing the reasonable thing, but also to do the loving thing (in all the ways Jesus showed love) in every place and in every way.

On behalf of your Governing Council,

Pastor Tim

Can we use an electronic signature?

For an easy-to-understand summary check out:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/pdfs/choosingSaferAct.pdf>