

Good morning!

On behalf of your Session, I would like to say "thank you" to each of you for your patience, cooperation and support adhering to any and every thing we've recommended or asked of you during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. These last months have truly been trying and often given us stormy waters to navigate, but it seems the clouds are lifting.

As you know by now, your Session convened a Special Meeting on June 2nd to review our current masking and physical distancing guidelines in light of new CDC guidelines for individuals - fully vaccinated as well as unvaccinated or immuno-compromised. It suffices to say these new guidelines can be confusing and certainly cannot be considered a blueprint for Congregational worship - that caveat is even included in some of the accompanying verbiage.

We discussed a number of different circumstances and scenarios including full vaccination rates; the way things are - or in some situations are not - being handled elsewhere including retail, grocery, schools, and restaurants & entertainment venues; the safety of Congregational singing - masked and unmasked; and even personal choice.

We considered the impact a change in our guidelines right now might have on families with young children, individuals who are not eligible for vaccination, the immuno-compromised, those in our presence who may be unvaccinated & unmasked and of course as of late - newly emerging variants.

In the end we agreed it all came down to what is best for the congregation and visitors of First Presbyterian Church Mesa, and where was the Spirit leading us. So to the best of our ability, we focused on the facts and factors affecting this body in the context of all of this.

Given that while Maricopa County has not yet reached a 50% vaccination rate - still not sufficient to support herd immunity - the status of *this* family appears to be stabilizing and a modification to normalize our worship behavior to be more in line with this stability seems appropriate.

To that end, for your comfort *and* continued safety effective Sunday, June 13th the Session has approved the following changes to our worship masking and physical distancing guidelines.

- Masks will be required when entering and exiting the Sanctuary. Once seated you may feel free to remove your mask, except when singing. However, we ask that you be respectful of anyone around you who may still choose to wear their mask.
- When out of your pew to visit before or after worship, please wear your mask.
- If you find it necessary to leave your pew during worship, please wear your mask.
- Masks are required during Congregational singing, due to the heightened risk from

aerosol droplets traveling long distances and remaining in the air for an extended period of time.

- The ushering teams will continue to wear their masks when greeting, seating or assisting you in any way.
- Pre-worship seating guidance, and post-worship dismissal by row is no longer required.

For the time being, we are asking that you continue to follow the current masking guidelines for all other non-worship on-campus activities. Please be respectful of those around you and wear a mask when entering a meeting room or the church office. If the consensus of those with you at the time is that masks are not necessary, then feel free to remove them.

Thanks for your time today, and for your continued cooperation as we all do our best to maintain and protect your safety.