

Re-opening Task Force Recommendations – May 20, 2021

First Presbyterian Church – Gainesville, GA

After careful consideration, the FPC Reopening Task Force recommends the following changes to our current guidelines for gathering together as we continue to manage the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Masks and distancing are no longer required for fully vaccinated people gathering at the church, effective immediately.** *Rationale: With the most recent update from the Center for Disease Control advising that fully vaccinated people are now able to gather without risk mitigation measures (masks, distancing), the responsibility for risk mitigation is moving from organizational and institutional to an individual one. Furthermore, the Task Force agrees that there is no meaningful way to enforce mask and distance requirements for organizations given this newest update from the CDC.*
- **Effective as of May 30, congregational singing may resume at worship services.** Official announcements from the church will stipulate that fully vaccinated people are free to sing in worship, while unvaccinated people will be encouraged to refrain from singing. *Rationale: Current scientific data strongly suggests that fully vaccinated people are highly unlikely to transmit the virus. This data, which supports the above recommendation (fully vaccinated people may go without masks, and no longer have to distance), also supports the resumption of congregational singing for fully vaccinated people.*
- **Effective as soon as possible, choral and group singing may resume for fully vaccinated people.** *Rationale: See above.*
- **Groups within the church who are unable to be vaccinated** (e.g. – children under the age of 12) are still required to follow mitigation measures (such as wearing masks and distancing), and will refrain from singing at church gatherings at this time. In addition, those teaching children under the age of 12 will be asked to continue to wear a mask while teaching. *Rationale: The Task Force acknowledges that this is a higher-risk group because the vaccine is currently not available for those under 12 years of age in Georgia. Gatherings will necessarily include attendees who have not been vaccinated. In order to prevent viral transmission, current protocols for this group will remain unchanged. Teachers will be asked to set an example by wearing masks and following current protocols, even if fully vaccinated.*
- **Effective immediately, outside groups will be allowed to gather at the discretion of Debbie Holcombe, Church Administrator.** Fully vaccinated people within these groups will not be required to wear masks or maintain distance. *Rationale: With the recent CDC announcement, there is no longer support for requirements involving outside groups.*
- **Effective immediately, food and drink may now be served at church gatherings.** *Rationale: With masks no longer being required for fully vaccinated people, there is no longer any reason to prohibit the service of food and drink at church gatherings.*

Other considerations of the Task Force:

- Assuming that the above recommendations are approved, the Task Force has no plans to meet again in the foreseeable future. However, the Task Force is not recommending that it be disbanded by the Session at this time. Any future “spike” in case rates, variants, etc. will necessitate focused discussion by the Task Force. In addition, some discussion will be needed once vaccines are made available to children. For these reasons, the Task Force will wait to meet again until circumstances dictate such discussion.

Prayerfully submitted to the Session for consideration and approval on May 20, 2021 by the FPC Re-opening Task Force: Rev. Lee Koontz, Rev. Shon Peppers, Rev. Margaret Turney-Ayer, Rev. Dallas Thompson, Debbie Holcomb, Susan Moon, Thomas Peppers, Alene Arenas, Joe Bidby, Stacy Morley, Jack Spencer, Don Willers