

Dear Church Family,

August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Less than a week ago, we told you about our decision to require masks for all adults in the children's wing to protect our unvaccinated and thus most vulnerable. COVID cases, especially the delta variant, have continued to surge since then. Staying on top of the data, the Reopening Task Force met and recommended that more be done.

At a called meeting on Wednesday night, Session wholeheartedly and unanimously agreed that **masks are now highly recommended while gathering indoors at First Presbyterian Church. Physical distancing of 6 feet should also be honored as much as practical.** As we are currently running the risk of church programs being negatively affected by quarantines or positive cases, it is our hope that these mitigation measures will help us avoid drastic changes to church life. We call on our church membership to practice loving obedience to this policy change so that our life together can be as normal and fruitful as possible. We remind all in our church that this recommendation is temporary, and further changes will be made based on local community data. Up-to-date data on hospitalizations can be found at the link below:

[nghs.com/covid-19/latest-covid-19-data/](https://www.fpcgainesville.org/news/2021/08/29/covid-19-latest-covid-19-data/)

Based on communications from many of our members, there is strong disagreement over whether to leave mitigation up to individuals or consider stronger requirements. Clearly our church is full of faithful people who want what is best for FPC and unsurprisingly, there is disagreement over what that is. As the pandemic continues, and with new understandings about the virus and its variants each day, it is known that getting back to normal will take time and patience. It is also known that having a vaccinated membership, wearing masks, and physical distancing indoors at FPC are effective ways to help stop the spread of Covid-19. **Session therefore highly recommends that everyone get vaccinated**, if medically able.

Please pray for relief from this pandemic, for finding creative ways to safely but faithfully be with each other, for staying calm and reaching out to others, and for one another's physical and spiritual well-being. Pray as well for local doctors, nurses, and hospital staff who are dealing with this ongoing pandemic on a daily basis. Remember that we are all in God's loving and healing hands.

In Christ's love,  
The Session of First Presbyterian Church, Gainesville