

July 29, 2021

Dear FBC,

COVID-19 continues to create challenges for all of us as now we are having to deal with the Delta Variant. The CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) has categorized Delta as a 'variant of concern' which means it poses a new threat to humans. The Delta Variant is more contagious than the original virus. The Delta Variant has become the dominant form of COVID-19 in the U.S. and elsewhere. A CDC study found that 83 percent of individuals testing positive for COVID-19 in July are linked to the Delta Variant.

While health experts are still investigating, initial studies have shown the vaccines are effective against the Delta Variant. The following is directly from the CDC website under the category of 'What We Know'

- **COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective at preventing COVID-19, including severe illness and death.**
- **COVID-19 vaccines are effective against severe disease and death from variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 currently circulating in the United States, including the Delta variant.**
- **Infections happen in only a small proportion of people who are fully vaccinated, even with the Delta variant. When these infections occur among vaccinated people, they tend to be mild.**

As many of you already know, the CDC has provided new guidance concerning masking indoors primarily because of the Delta Variant. Also, from the CDC website under the category of 'What We Can Do'

- **To reduce the risk of being infected with the Delta variant and possibly spreading it to others, wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission.**

According to the latest findings, Franklin County, Kentucky, is an area of substantial transmission.

Taking all of this into consideration, I AM RECOMMENDING/REQUESTING THAT WE ALL WEAR MASKS IN OUR FACILITIES FOR THE TIME BEING. THIS IS NOT A MANDATE OR REQUIREMENT, BUT I STRONGLY ENCOURAGE US TO WEAR A MASK FOR NOW. I will be wearing a mask except when I am preaching. We will have masks available for anybody who needs one.

I have decided not to make this a 'requirement' because presently the science says the vaccines are effective. This does not mean we are 100% protected from getting the virus or the variant. It means the vaccines have shown they maintain their viability against the Delta Variant. It also

means that on the rare occasion when a vaccinated person gets the virus or the Delta Variant they are not dealing with a life-or-death issue. For the vast majority, the symptoms would typically be mild. We also have a very high percentage of fully vaccinated individuals in our congregation. This means our gatherings are not entirely unknown concerning the rate of vaccinated persons.

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR BEING MASKED AND SOCIALLY DISTANCED FROM CHILDREN WHO HAVE NOT HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE VACCINATED WILL STILL BE IN PLACE. UNVACCINATED INDIVIDUALS WILL CONTINUE TO BE REQUIRED TO WEAR MASKS.

I realize that some will decide to worship and participate online because of the concerns surrounding the Delta Variant. I encourage you all to make wise decisions concerning your individual health needs. This is a difficult situation and one that may call for change in the coming weeks and months. There will be differing opinions on what should be done. I pray that our love for one another will be on display as we respect and show kindness to our sisters and brothers.

Thank you for your continued support of our community of faith. I believe in you and am always here for you to help with anything I can.

In Christ,
Pastor Keith