

HEALTH MINISTRY STATEMENT ON COVID PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Everyone is tired of the limits placed on us by the COVID-19 pandemic. We all want to return to old practices of worship, greeting and singing in church. Each of us has societal responsibilities to keep ourselves and others as safe as possible, so that we can all join in worship.

We know that:

*The average age of our congregation is over 65 years and, therefore, in the high-risk category for serious infection and increased risk of death due to COVID infection. Many of these members have health conditions that increase their risk of disease.

*We have members who are not fully immunized due to their personal choice, young age, or having conditions that make the vaccine contraindicated.

* Recent variants of the virus, namely Delta and newly discovered Omicron, are highly transmissible.

*During the holiday season, our congregation travels to or receives visitors from areas where the incidence of disease is substantial or high.

*Risk increases in large public indoor gatherings.

*Coughing, sneezing, shouting and singing disperse droplets further than normal talking.

*Asymptomatic people can carry and spread the virus.

*Vaccines reduce the risk of serious disease, hospitalization and deaths due to COVID.

*Vaccine effectiveness and natural acquired immunity wanes after several months.

*Masks reduce the risk of spreading disease to others and offer some protection to the wearer.

*Disease incidence and, therefore, risk fluctuates quickly.

THEREFORE, the Health Ministry team recommends the following prevention efforts based on CDC guidelines:

*All eligible persons receive the recommended doses, including boosters, of an approved vaccine as soon as possible. Anyone over 18 should get booster shot six months after initial Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or two months after Johnson and Johnson vaccine (CDC 11/29/2021)

*"CDC recommends people follow preventive strategies, such as wearing masks in public indoor settings, especially in areas of significant or high community transmission" CDC 11/26/2021)

*Anyone who has symptoms of illness, such as cough, headache, fever, should stay home and consider getting tested.

*Anyone testing positive for COVID, or been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, should refrain from attending church in person until they are known to be negative.

*Wash hands frequently or use hand sanitizers provided.

*All attendees over the age of 2 years should wear masks indoors. "CDC recommends wearing of masks in public indoor spaces

*Church will limit number of attendees and encourage social distancing.

*Increase fresh air indoors by opening doors for ventilation.

*Review of these recommendations January 15, 2022, or sooner if conditions or new science warrant.

11/29/2021