

August 12, 2021

Greetings Smyrna FUMC family,

I know we were all hopeful that the time had finally come to put Covid in our rearview mirror as case counts plummeted at the beginning of the summer and CDC recommendations shifted to no longer recommending face coverings for people who were vaccinated. Our congregational survey from the beginning of the summer also yielded the encouraging statistic that we were heading toward something like a 90% vaccination rate as we loosened our guidelines over the summer. Thank you for choosing to be vaccinated and thank you for your perseverance as we have struggled to get through this difficult season together.

However, in recent weeks we have seen an alarming resurgence of Covid due to the Delta variant. CDC guidelines have shifted to recommend vaccinated people also wear face coverings in indoor public places in areas where there are substantial or high transmission rates. Rutherford County is currently a high transmission rate area. Vaccination remains our most powerful weapon in the fight against Covid. If you can receive the vaccine, please get vaccinated as soon as possible. Studies continue to show that the vaccine remains extremely effective against the Delta variant. Breakthrough infections occur in less than 1% of fully vaccinated people, symptoms are much milder, and less than .004% of fully vaccinated people experience an infection requiring hospitalization. Due to this resurgence in Covid and the CDC's updated guidelines, our bishop recently offered a recommendation to churches to reconsider Covid guidelines.

Our church council and/or Covid team will be considering these factors and recommendations and how/if we should modify our Covid guidelines in coming days. In the meantime, we simply ask everyone to please consider wearing a face covering when indoors regardless of vaccination status. Let's also be sensitive to the fact that some people may not be comfortable with handshakes or hugs right now. We will be evaluating how/whether to hold upcoming events this fall. **Our fish fry will go on as scheduled this Saturday.** We will have plenty of outdoor seating options as well as to go options to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Please continue to be in prayer for our church and our world as we continue in our struggle against Covid. Keep the faith friends and stay healthy and safe. I look forward to seeing you at the fish fry on Saturday and at church on Sunday.

In Christian love for you all,
Pastor Theresa