

May 25, 2021

Dear Westminster Church Family,

Your Session, the elected leadership of the church, met for its monthly meeting last night and discussed our COVID-19 guidelines, particularly the use of masks.

While prayerfully voting as individuals, the Session is advised on these matters by the Westminster Worship Task Force (comprised of Westminster members representing the medical, county government and LPS communities as well as Session, Worship & Music and Building & Grounds Committees). In May 2021, the guidelines were revisited following CDC and Lincoln/Lancaster guidance and changes to fully vaccinated individuals, along with our Biblical call to love our neighbors and look out for the interest of others before our own. The Task Force came to the Session with two options on mask policy—it's not an easy decision.

We understand that the environment is changing as cases drop and residents are vaccinated. Mask policies have changed by many businesses and government entities; and more continue to do so. We are walking into stores, restaurants and other places where many people are not wearing masks.

What does that mean for Westminster? What are our responsibilities to the public we welcome with loving open arms? What about each other? What about the unvaccinated? What about the immunocompromised?

These are some of the many questions we focused on as we discussed the mask guideline. We are to love our neighbors (in and outside of our congregation). We have vowed, as we baptized infants and children, to support and love the child (and all children in our midst), and to help them grow as followers of Christ. So, how can we support, love and help our children in this situation?

After much discussion, your Session voted to highly encourage people to wear masks in the Westminster facility, including the Sanctuary, in order to protect unvaccinated children and immunocompromised. This decision recognizes the changing environment and will be reviewed by the Session in two weeks. Our reasons for the decision include:

- **Children under the age of 12 are not yet eligible for vaccination.**
- **Wearing a mask is a way of showing that you LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, particularly for those not vaccinated, like children and the immunocompromised.**

Please keep these reasons in mind as you make your individual choices. And, please be most mindful in the 'travel' areas before and after church or other events.

In addition, Session passed a motion that as of May 30, Westminster will no longer require registration for worship.

Pastor Chris and the Session hope you appreciate the gradual changes in Sanctuary worship since we have returned to the building—numbers of worshippers, hymnals, programs, and now these changes. You will also see in the guidelines to be published a more open traffic flow after church as we open the East doors. In addition, staff may be available for greeting at their own comfort level. Thank you for conforming to all the guidelines over these past several weeks.

We will continue to have our virtual worship services as well and, over time, are looking to harmonizing the two services. With equipment upgrades, we hope to eventually live stream the Sanctuary worship service—the same service for all.

Please pray with the Session for the day when we will worship again with no constraints. We all long for normalcy in every aspect of our lives, including church—singing, organ, choir, smiling faces, hugs. Please pray with us for a continued decrease in cases of COVID and an increase in vaccinations, here and around the world. Pray for those who have lost loved ones. And pray that no one else will have to suffer. It is that, more than anything, that underlies this decision—a desire to love our neighbors as ourselves and ensure no one suffers needlessly.

Your Servants in Christ,

The Session of Westminster Presbyterian Church

Rob Baltensperger, Mark Davis, April Douglas, Tim Gergen, Glenna Haller, Grace Hemmerling, Steve Hughes, Emily Killham, Sandi Larson, Laurie Lofquist, Cyndy Maddux, Rex Martin, Gary Moulton, Pam Oliver, Tom Pappas, Rev. Chris Peters (Moderator), Stanley Rediger, Kathy Rohwedder, Margaret Sprude, Gwen Thorpe, Allen Wachter, Dan Wherry, Diana Wild