

May 14, 2021

Hello First UMC Family of Faith,

It is exciting and hopeful to hear the updated recommendations from the CDC that those who are fully vaccinated no longer need to wear masks in either indoor or outdoor gatherings (with the exceptions of healthcare centers, public transport, etc). This is good news based on scientific data, but there are also challenging dynamics that we will need to navigate together.

It's important to remember that our building is also a healthcare facility during weekdays for the Wausau Free Clinic. When we have church meetings during the week, we ask that all people wear masks in common areas (entrances, hallways, and bathrooms). Once inside a meeting room, you may safely remove your mask if you are fully vaccinated.

Another consideration is for people who are not vaccinated. Younger children aren't able to be vaccinated yet, teens are just starting their vaccinations, and some people have severe health conditions that prevent them from getting vaccinated. Even if you are fully vaccinated, you may sense a call to wear a mask to show support for those who can't be vaccinated. We ask people not to make any assumptions about people or reasons why they may wear a mask or not.

If you are unvaccinated for any reason, we trust that you will wear a mask indoors at all times. This is for the safety of others who aren't yet fully vaccinated as well as your own safety. We strongly urge everyone who is approved to be vaccinated to do so as soon as possible. It is free and easy to walk in at NTC between 11-7, Monday-Saturday (Building and Industry entrance).

We will no longer need sign-ups to attend the 10 am service, but we will only use every other pew out of consideration for those who aren't vaccinated yet. We are also moving the 8 am worship service back to the Chapel. We're excited to begin offering a fellowship time with light refreshments at 9:00am in the Courtyard (weather permitting) and/or Parlor.

The CDC has found it safe for groups of fully vaccinated people to sing indoors. This is exciting, but it poses a higher risk for those who aren't vaccinated. Given both factors, we will allow singing for the last hymn so that people can leave right before or after. As it proves safer, we look forward to offering more singing throughout the service.

These are big steps forward in being able to gather, sing, and connect with one another as we help each other grow in our faith. It's often hard to make sudden changes, especially after difficult times, so let the Holy Spirit's grace and patience fill you in this process. Thank you for your faithfulness as we continue to proceed carefully and prayerfully.

With Grateful Praise,

Pastor Rebecca Voss and Jennifer Marzu, Chair of Ministry Council and COVID Safety