

North Village Church Response:

Over the last 15-months our elders have dedicated significant time to events going on in our world and our country, and specifically how to best walk through Covid-19. The whole process has been challenging, because the data isn't always easy to understand and we haven't always responded to the data with the same conclusions on a personal level.

In March 2020 our city asked us to shelter in place, and we moved our worship service to an online / video format 100%. Our church family rallied to the challenge, and although unique, we were able to participate in worship as a church family in that season.

In May 2020, our state made it possible for us to gather online and in person, so we began to offer a 4pm gathering that was masked, safe and socially distanced to see if people in our church family were interested.

In October 2020 our church family secured Cumberland Presbyterian Church as a place for worship, and this opportunity was a huge blessing to our church family. During that season we were able to provide masked, safe, and socially distanced worship for those who were interested.

January 2021 the FDA began to make vaccinations available to people in the United States and we have encouraged people to get the vaccine and reduce the spread of Covid.

In May 2021 our church family had to move our worship space outside in a park. Although this hasn't been ideal, our church family has rallied to make the most of the opportunity.

On May 13, 2021, the CDC stated that vaccinated people no longer needed to wear masks indoors. However, also according to CDC guidelines, we do encourage non-vaccinated people to continue to wear masks indoors.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/pdfs/choosingSaferAct.pdf>

We have prayerfully sought wisdom and counsel at each point of this pandemic, and this new update is continuing to move us in that direction. Many things have been put on pause over the last 15-months, and we are hopeful that new updates from the CDC will continue to move us out of the pandemic.

Though masks are no longer required, we will continue to clean and disinfect high-touch areas before and after the worship service. In addition, if you feel sick, please stay home, rest, and wait to return until you feel better.

Again, this year has been unprecedented in every way, and we appreciate your patience as we have navigated every step of it with prayer and discernment. Lord willing, we look forward to seeing you this Sunday in worship.

FAQ:

1. **What about those who are unvaccinated?** We encourage everyone to get the vaccination. Those who choose not to get the vaccination are encouraged to wear mask.
2. **What if unvaccinated people show up in worship without a mask?** Those who are not yet fully vaccinated or chose not to be vaccinated are encouraged to wear a mask.
3. **What if people think we aren't being compassionate toward others?** This is an incredibly difficult season, and we fully understand that not everyone will feel comfortable in this situation. This new reality will take time to adjust to and we want to help you do that. We're here to process what this means for you to partake in the life of our church on Sundays and our upcoming events as a whole.

The guiding Scripture for us through this pandemic has been Colossians 2:16-19, *"16 Therefore, no one is to act as your judge in regard to food and drink, or in respect to a festival or a new moon, or a Sabbath day— 17 things which are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. 18 Take care that no one keeps defrauding you of your prize by delighting in humility and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, 19 and not holding firmly to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God."*

- a. There are going to be some who decide to keep wearing masks, and it would be easy to elevate ourselves as being a people who really care about others.
- b. There are going to be some who stop wearing a mask, and it would be easy to elevate ourselves as being a people who trust God.

It would be easy to pit these two biblical views against one another, and take biblical values to elevate ourselves over one another, but the Apostle Paul calls us to "not act as a judge" in regards to these secondary issues.

During the pandemic we absolutely listened to CDC and made decisions accordingly, but as vaccinations are released and the position has been changed by the CDC, then we are going to follow accordingly.

Is this going to be challenging for our church family? Of course, but the Lord will use this in our lives to help us mature in Him, grow closer together, and ultimately bring greater glory to Him.