

RESPONSE TO LATEST CDC RECOMMENDATIONS

Because it is Friday, with Sunday services just two days away, I, Chaz Ruark, am sending my thoughts regarding the change in CDC restrictions that were issued yesterday without the usual process of polling Presbytery Lead Team members.

The CDC said on Thursday, May 13th that persons who are fully vaccinated can freely interact with others without the use of masks. This is indeed good news as our nation moves closer to “herd immunity” and a return to gathering in communities as before the pandemic. As churches make their plans in response to this announcement, I urge you to keep in mind the following factors:

- decisions on time, place, and circumstances of worship is the task of the Session. (These boards need some time to have a meeting and make their decision)

- though many members are reporting to be fully vaccinated, not everyone has had both shots. And children have not received any shots as of yet.

- sessions have reported strong resistance to acting as gatekeepers in regards to vaccination verification (an understandable position)

- those with extenuating conditions, i.e. compromised immune systems, etc. may still feel uncomfortable in a group setting

- some regions still have a mask mandate in place, because local governments also need time to react.

I request that pastoral leaders, session members, and parishioners practice two traits in the next few days. First patience, we have all come a long way in the last year and have avoided a major outbreak of COVID in our congregations because of good sense health decisions. Please hang on for a few more days to be sure we take the next step properly. Secondly grace, not everyone is in the same place whether the reason is a matter of comfort with change or an actual medical concern for themselves or a member of their family.

Signs are very hopeful concerning our communal life. Let's continue to extend grace to one another as we maneuver these final steps.

Peace and grace to one and all.

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