

HARMONY UMC UPDATED COVID GUIDLINES EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 5

Dear Harmony Friends,

After eighteen months, I did not think I would be writing a letter like this again, because, well, it seemed like we were almost there. And with good reason. A vaccine to help fight the COVID infection was readily available. As more people became vaccinated and the Loudoun County COVID positivity rate declined, we eased up on the masking and social distancing requirements. Oh, what a joy!

But now comes a surge of infections caused by the Delta variant. As of today, August 26, the CDC lists Loudoun County's transmission rate as high. On Monday, just three days ago, the transmission rate for Loudoun County was substantial. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

On Monday night, Harmony's Post-Covid Re-Entry Group (PRG) met to discuss the infection increases we are witnessing in our area. After a lot of discussion, we agreed that it is time to reinstate stricter guidelines for the health and safety of our Harmony faith family. These guidelines will go into effect on Sunday, September 5. A copy of the updated guidelines can be found here: [8-26-21 PRG COVID UPDATE](#)

(When you click on this link the document will be downloaded on your computer/device for viewing.)

Here are the important changes to note:

- Masks are required for all individuals (vaccinated and unvaccinated) when inside the church. Singing will be done only with masks on. These guidelines will be in place as long as Loudoun County remains in the “substantial” or “high” transmission area as determined by the CDC.
- *All youth/children under 12 years of age must continue to wear a face mask.
- *We will continue to offer a 10am indoor worship service that is live streamed
- *Please monitor yourself with regard to acceptable social distancing.

- *Until the Delta variant is more “under control” in our county, indoor events, where food is served, will not be allowed. (Food events/meetings outdoors are acceptable at this time).

While these guidelines do not go into effect until Sunday, September 5, I urge you to begin practicing these guidelines this coming Sunday, August 29.

Of course, these guidelines only apply to what we can do the once or twice a week we gather at Harmony. What can we do each and every day to combat this deadly virus?

- Pray. Pray for the sick and dying. Pray for the medical staff who tend to the sick and dying. Pray for the first responders who transport the critical ill to the hospitals. Pray for the families and friends who grieve those who die. Pray for communities to work together for the health of the people.
- Be vigilant with mask wearing, hand washing, and vaccinating. The vaccines are working and greatly reduce risks to those fully vaccinated. While breakthrough cases happen, fully vaccinated people with a breakthrough infection are less likely to develop serious illness than those who are unvaccinated and get COVID-19.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/effectiveness/why-measure-effectiveness/breakthrough-cases.html>
- Please get vaccinated. If you are eligible and have chosen to remain unvaccinated, please prayerfully reconsider. The Delta variant is highly transmittable, and the unvaccinated are at much higher risk of infection. Additionally, they are much more likely to transmit the virus to other unvaccinated people, including children under the age of 12 for whom there is currently no vaccine.

Finally, I quote from a letter written by Bishop David M. Reed of the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas. He writes: “above all these, put on love. As churches and individually, we have put up with so much during this season, from inconvenience to grief. We have put off so many things that matter to us, big and small. We have put away cherished customs and habits. Now it is time for us to rededicate ourselves wholeheartedly to putting on the love of Christ, regarding one another through the eyes of Jesus, and loving one another as he loves us. Because we are his Body, there can be no other way for us than this. It

is the only way for us to continue living in and moving through this pandemic together."

<https://www.dwtx.org/blog/regarding-the-delta-variant-a-pastoral-letter-to-churches>

My thanks to each of you for your patience, your tenacity, and your faithful attention to the health and safety of our Harmony family.

Remember the 23rd Psalm:

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever. (NIV)

Grace, Blessings, and Peace,
Pastor Debra