



*We aspire to be beacons of God's love and truth ...*

January 13, 2022

Dear Members and Friends of FPC Moorestown,

COVID has come home for many in our community and our congregation. The virus visited me on New Year's Day. That morning I first thought I was getting a cold—my first since the start of the pandemic. I googled my symptoms and then took a home test that revealed a positive score. I got it. I'm grateful that I never felt awful other than a mildly painful sore throat. I probably infected our youngest son, Miles. Thankfully, Leslie and Sam have so far escaped. I know that many of you have your own stories.

Infection rates in New Jersey are soaring. Hospitals and other health services are near the point of becoming overwhelmed. Teachers, students and school administrators are struggling to find the best way forward. These are trying times for all of us.

Session met by Zoom on Wednesday evening, January 12th to reconsider our COVID protocols in light of the recent increase of the CALI (COVID Activity Level Index) score, which measures transmission risk. Currently, the CALI level is at VERY HIGH. Earlier this fall, Session decided that the CALI score will be the metric used to measure our COVID risk.

Dr. Steve Trzeciak, a long-time member and elder, joined Session for the first hour. Steve is the Chairman and Chief of the Department of Medicine at Cooper University Health Care. We listened as he described the latest information on the Omicron variant. He said that it spreads easily and rapidly.

**Session approved the following on Wednesday evening, effective Sunday, January 16, 2022.**

FOR INDOOR SUNDAY WORSHIP -- SANCTUARY AND MILLER COMMONS

- 1) Masks required for all persons
- 2) Physical distancing will be encouraged in both worship spaces
- 3) No congregational singing. All who lead singing will continue to wear masks

FOR INDOOR MEETINGS

- 1) Everyone who enters the building is required to mask, regardless of their vaccination status. Groups are welcome to meet at church, though some are moving to virtual meetings.
- 2) Our Annual Meeting, set for Sunday, February 6, 2022 at 12:15 p.m. will be offered virtually via Zoom.
- 3) No food will be served indoors.

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These revised guidelines remain in effect until the CALI scores drop.

As exhausting and frustrating as life has been during the pandemic, I thank God for the opportunities COVID-19 brings us to care for and love one another and members of our community. Dr. Trzeciak reminded me the other day that wearing a mask helps limit the spread of the virus and is an important way we can support our medical personnel by keeping hospitals from becoming overwhelmed.

The best medical advice is that we try to wear a high-quality mask, observe physical distancing, limit touch with others and wash our hands often. Vaccines also appear to be effective in reducing impact of the virus.

Beyond all of the important safety precautions we've set in place, let these directions from Colossians 3 be the ultimate word for how we're to clothe ourselves in these days:

**Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. (Colossians 3: 12-14)**

Steve began his comments by asserting that he's optimistic that there will be an end to the pandemic. Resting in the Lord's sovereign care and wearing the clothing of compassion, I'm certain that God will see us through.

Thank you for your understanding, your patience and your support.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Stuart Spencer*

Pastor