

May 19, 2021

Hello Pastors and Genesis Churches -

With the new guidelines coming from both the CDC and the state (and the confusion that has resulted!), I'm updating our guidelines. As you probably know, as of today fully vaccinated people do not need to wear masks or stay socially distanced in most situations. At the same time, those who are "unvaccinated or who have an unknown vaccination status must be spaced 6 feet apart in assigned sections" and wear masks when not seated. In addition, the President has said that the new policies would be on an honor system, and most local businesses and counties are operating on the honor system as well.

I'm keenly aware that the issue of masks and vaccines has been a divisive one. I also believe that in our divided world, the church has an opportunity to show a different way.

Principles that our churches need to maintain as we move forward:

1. We will create a warm and safe welcome for all who come
2. We will continue working to bring people together, rather than divide

With this in mind, here are my recommendations:

1. When your church is ready to lift the mask requirement, continue to have a section for people who wish to remain socially distanced. Please make sure this section is neither the worst nor the best "seats in the house."
2. Allow people to choose their section (and work with leaders to love and welcome all people!). I don't want anyone "shamed" for their choice. We also are not "the enforcers."
3. Work with children's ministry folks and parents to determine how to move ahead with children's ministry (remember, kids under 12 aren't vaccinated). Take cues from your school in this regard. (Also ask: how do you make sure all kids are safe & welcomed? I thought about this when I saw a post from a friend whose child has a heart condition and is therefore more vulnerable if they get Covid.)
4. Ask staff and volunteers who interface with the public to continue wearing a mask, even if they are vaccinated. That way, anyone who comes who may be immunocompromised or unvaccinated will be interacting with those who are masked.

I trust this is helpful, and hoping that even these guidelines will soon not be needed. If you have specific questions, feel free to reach out.

Superintendent Pam