January 4, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It’s hard to believe that the Coronavirus pandemic has been raging almost 2 years. While it is encouraging that the new Omicron variant seems to cause less severe disease than other variants, it is much more contagious. The COVID test positivity rate in Dauphin County is already at an all-time high of nearly 30% and experts predict increasing infections in the next few weeks due to holiday gatherings. In light of this, we have reviewed and revised our church protocols for gathering indoors.

**The following are our church guidelines for January 2022:**

* Anyone isolating for confirmed COVID-19 or quarantining while awaiting COVID test results, must stay home and worship online.
* Anyone feeling ill in the past 48 hours, especially with fever or cough, must stay home and worship online. CDC screening guidance may be found [HERE](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html).
* Those not fully vaccinated (includes a booster) are encouraged to worship virtually, online, for their own safety.
* Those at risk for severe disease (immunocompromised, elderly, underlying health problems) are encouraged to worship virtually, online, for their own safety.
* Masks are ALWAYS required for ALL persons entering the church building.
* There will be NO EATING OR DRINKING inside the church due to mask requirements.

**We will reassess the situation at the end of January and communicate any changes in guidelines at that time.**

Click [HERE](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/omicron-variant.html) to read more about the Omicron variant as well as general CDC recommendations regarding COVID-19.

Thank you for adhering to our guidelines and helping to protect those who are most vulnerable.

In humble service,

The First UMC Staff