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June 9, 2021

Dear Church family,

“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.
Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”
Romans 12:10,11

Covid Protocols at Ascension on track to change in July

Since my last letter four weeks ago we have continued to see the numbers of those infected with Covid-19 locally come down - thanks be to God! Most people in Allegheny County who are eligible to be vaccinated are now also fully vaccinated.

That said, the pandemic is *not* over. Let us therefore continue to pray for those people who are at risk or who are sick, and especially for people in other parts of the world where the pandemic continues to devastate so many lives. Let us also continue to extend grace to one another.

As we know, at present, children under 12 cannot receive the vaccine and others, for a variety of reasons, are also not vaccinated. That said, for most who are willing, vaccinations are widely and readily available. It is also fair to say that while children can develop Covid-19, many of them have no symptoms, and those who do get sick tend to have relatively mild symptoms. Of course, children with underlying health conditions may be at increased risk for more severe illness.

In the light of all this I am delighted to announce that, *subject to any significant local spike or surge in infections*, we are on track to change our protocols.

Beginning Sunday, July 4:

Masks:

The wearing of masks will no longer be required for people to attend services at Ascension. Of course, people of any age, vaccinated or not, may choose to continue to wear a mask while attending a service.

However, we **request and recommend** that all those who are eligible to receive a vaccine but who, for whatever reason, **are not fully vaccinated - please continue to wear a mask**. Parents of children under 12 will need to use their own discretion about what is right for their children.

These protocols will also apply to those using the building from July 4th.

Holy Communion:

Given that Covid-19 is an airborne virus and given the ever-increasing numbers of fully vaccinated people attending church, we will also be reintroducing Holy Communion in “both kinds” – that is we will be offering the bread *and* the wine. It seems wise, however, not to offer a shared cup at this time. Any who wish to continue to receive only the bread may do so.

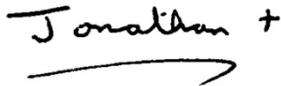
Rather than each communicant dipping his or her own wafer into the chalice, the bread-bearers will dip a wafer in the communion wine (known as “intinction”) and place the wafer into a communicant’s cupped hands. If anyone would prefer only to receive the wafer, they should indicate that to the bread-bearer.

Two Sunday Services:

We will, as previously communicated, beginning on July 4, move to a weekly pattern of two services on Sundays: 9:00 am in the Tent and 11:00 am in the Nave. The 11:00 am service will also continue to be livestreamed on YouTube.

Finally, a huge thank you to all who have been so patient, even when you may not have agreed with all the decisions that have been made these past many months. It is so very good to be regathering together week by week in worship.

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan +". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the end. Below the signature is a horizontal line that curves upwards at the right end, resembling a flourish or a stylized underline.

Jonathan N. Millard
(Rector)