

COVID RESPONSE TEAM REPORT

May 21, 2021

The Covid Response Team (CRT) comprised of Bill Bunt, Kathy Charette, Ron Chipriano, Pastor Mira Hewlett, Kerm Leitner and Pastor Jake Waybright met on Saturday, May 15 via Zoom. Bob Goeltsch was unable to attend.

Historically, when the CRT was formed and initially called the Reopening Team, the major priority was to protect the most vulnerable among us from catching COVID-19 – those 65 years of age and older and those with chronic medical conditions. We delayed reopening until it was safe to do so and, accordingly, reopened on September 20, closed again in November and then reopened on February 14 with the health and safety of our most vulnerable being a major consideration in all of our decision-making. Weekly, the CRT has received the reports from the state on the numbers of cases in Cumberland County, and last Friday's numbers were the best they have been since October. We met on the Saturday morning following the CDC's announcement on Thursday that everyone who has been fully vaccinated no longer needs to be masked indoors or outdoors.

Since June, the most vulnerable among us has dramatically changed. The miracles of science and medicine have provided our nation with several vaccines, which have proven to be quite effective in protecting individuals and also in stopping the spread of this deadly virus. The CRT assisted about 200 members and friends in getting appointments for their shots. Presently, the supply of the vaccines is readily available throughout the nation to those 16 years and older, with just last week those 12-15 being able to schedule vaccines. For our teenagers to be fully vaccinated it will take 6+ more weeks. Hence, the most vulnerable among us now are those 11 years old and younger, those unable to be vaccinated because of medical conditions, and the immunocompromised for whom the vaccine may not be as effective. There are many children in our congregation for whom the vaccine is still not available.

As we transition to more normalcy, an important goal for our church is also to extend an extravagant welcome for everyone attending. Being a welcoming congregation is a core value, and we want to do our best to create a space where people, who are at different places in their personal comfort, can all feel welcomed and included in the love of Christ within our Christian community. We encourage everyone to ask not "what must I do?" but rather "what can I do to make someone else feel honored, respected, and welcomed?" As Paul says in Romans 12:10, "Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor."

The Leadership Council at its May 17 meeting approved the following Covid Response Team recommendations which are **effective on Sunday, May 30:**

- On line signups and capacity limits **in the Worship Center** will be eliminated.

- The Covid Response Team and the Leadership Council are requesting that every person on Sunday mornings enter our building with a Christ-like attitude – remember that “Jesus loved all of the children of the world” – and wear a mask in support of all the children among us and those unable to be vaccinated due to health issues. While we are not requiring masks for those who are vaccinated, we ask that as part of a Christ-like attitude you carry one in your pocket and wear it in indoor situations where we still have people from all comfort levels mingling and also in our Kids and Student areas. We also ask that when you are in conversations with people who are masked that you always offer to put your mask on to make them feel comfortable.
- Worship Seating: We understand that there are vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals who may feel most comfortable sitting in the Worship Center with social distancing. The Worship Center will give everyone a choice with both an open seating section and a social distancing seating.
- Once seated, and if fully vaccinated, individuals may remove their masks and participate in all of the elements of the service. We ask you to put on your mask at the conclusion of the service before going to the Gathering.
- Offering will not be collected by passing plates during services. The offering boxes will continue to be available at the Worship Center doors.
- While the eating of food may now be consumed indoors, the CRT and Leadership Council would like individuals and groups to eat outside as much as possible, weather permitting.
- Our Kids and Student Ministries and children in our Nursery will continue to wear masks inside for all activities. Adults supervising Kids, Students and the Nursery will also be masked. This is consistent with procedures being followed by four area school districts. For activities outdoors, masks will not be required for the children, youth and adults involved.
- On weekdays from 6am to 6pm, everyone entering the building must be wearing a mask to comply with the state guidelines regulating our Little Lights Learning Center. Our Little Lights use the Fun Room, Gathering and Gymnasium throughout the week, and we must be in compliance with the state’s requirements.
- During this weekday time frame, once you have arrived at your destination apart from the Little Lights areas, Fun Room, Gathering or Gymnasium, those fully vaccinated do not need to wear masks.
- As we have requested for your coming and going on Sundays in the Gathering, we would ask each of you to be Christ-like, and if there is a person who is not comfortable yet meeting in Sunday School classes or small groups without masks that you ask him/her simply, “Would you like me to put on my mask?” Seating capacities for classrooms have been eliminated.

The Covid Response Team thanks each of you for your cooperation throughout this entire pandemic. Your positive responses to all of our requests, policies, and procedures; amazing financial support; thoughtful sharing of ideas and suggestions; and prayers have been greatly appreciated. Please continue to pray as we move

together through this transitional period and continue to strive to Live Like Jesus during COVID-19.