

We want to encourage as much equitable access to worshipping as a body of Christ as possible. We want to be instruments of God's work, encouraging discipleship amongst fellow believers, and introducing and supporting new believers; we want to come together for worship and in time of a local, national, and global pandemic due to COVID-19; and we want to do so in ways that aren't too distracting to that worship, for us as individuals, as a corporate church body and with the community at large.

So let's show up for worship activities humbly, obediently, with our focus on loving God and one another, as we would love ourselves (Matthew 22:37-40).

And with a Mask.



I'm sure we have all seen the various approaches to mask wearing. Costco for example will not allow members to enter the store without a mask. Every worker in Washington State that does not work alone or at home is required to wear a mask. And how many times have you seen a mask dutifully protecting the adam's apple of the wearer leaving their mouth and nose exposed?

So here are some thoughts in response to potential challenges with mask wearing at a worship related event:

What Kind of Mask is Required?

Washington Stated DOH issued mask guidelines on June 23rd recommending cloth face coverings. Hospital grade masks are discouraged for daily wear in order to save the supply for health care workers. What is a cloth face covering? A cloth face covering is fabric that covers your nose and mouth. It can be:

- A sewn mask with ties or straps that go around the head or behind the ears
- Several layers of fabric tied around a person's head
- Made from a variety of materials like cotton, fleece, or linen
- Factory-made or home-made

Is Mask Wearing the Only Protective Measure Left?

Nope. Please continue to wash your hands, catch coughs and sneezes, practice physical distancing, clean surfaces, and self-monitor for symptoms.

We Couldn't Possibly Be Expected to Partake in Communion With a Mask On, Right?

Here's how we anticipate it would work: after communion elements are distributed and when it is time to consume them, we would first take the masks off, consume the elements, and then replace the masks safely over our nose and mouth.

But a mask fogs up my glasses!

That can definitely be true. We suggest getting a mask that is form fitting to your nose so that moist air is forced to the sides instead of up into your glasses. Or if you can safely take your glasses off while worshipping, that may be an option.

I forgot to bring my mask

Don't worry, we will have plenty of extra masks available that will help you and others worship without worry, confusion, or temptation to judge.

I just don't want to wear a mask!

Don't let that prevent you or others you care about from worshipping. FPCT will continue to livestream services and we encourage you to participate remotely whenever you aren't able to attend safely in person.

Who Shouldn't Wear a Mask?

The CDC suggests that children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who couldn't remove the mask on their own.

What Happens if Someone Else Shows Up and Worships Without Mask Protection?

That's a very real possibility and there are a range of choices in how we can respond to that. Here's some advice:

1. Don't judge that person, there may be legitimate reasons, why they can't wear a mask.
2. If it makes you uncomfortable, simply stay away if possible and if approached, simply state you are uncomfortable. We are all going to work to be understanding with each other.
3. If you are concerned another person's behavior is endangering our church community and you would like assistance, reach out to an elder or someone on the Re-Opening Task Force and we will pray with you and determine how to approach the situation.

What Does the Word of God Have to Say About All of This?

Here are some passages you could read to ready your heart (and there are so many more):

Ephesians 6:10-20 The Armor of God

Philippians 2:1-4 Imitating Christ's Humility

Colossians 3:1-4; 12-17 Living as Those Made Alive in Christ

2 Corinthians 13:5-10 Final Warnings

Romans 13:1-7 Submission to Governing Authorities

Does the State Really Say We Have to Wear Masks?

Yep, at least for now. Information from the State is updated every few weeks, especially as counties move from one phase of the Safe Start plan to another. As of 6/18/20 these are the regulations from the State with regards to Religious and Faith Based Organizations:

https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/Phase%201-3%20-%20Religious%20and%20faith-based%20orgs%20FINAL_6%2018%202020.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Here a few pertinent excerpts:

With frequent reports of spiritual gatherings becoming COVID-19 "superspreader" events in which a single service results in dozens of new COVID-19 infections, if possible, spiritual worship should continue to be done remotely or at a drive-in service. But if spiritual worship must be done in-person, the following requirements must be employed.

Religious and faith-based organizations are permitted to, provided all requirements in this document are met:

... Religious and faith-based organizations must specifically ensure operations follow the main L&I COVID-19 requirements to protect employees, members, and visitors:

- ...
- ...A facial covering must be worn by every individual not alone at the location unless their exposure dictates a higher level of protection under Department of Labor & Industries safety and health rules and guidance. Refer to Coronavirus Facial Covering and Mask Requirements for additional details. A cloth facial covering is described in the Department of Health guidance, <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/ClothFacemasks.pdf>.

A scientific reason to wear a mask

COVID-19 can have serious health impacts on those it infects, is highly transmissible, and we still don't know much about the behavior of the virus. New information will continue to be published as it becomes available, such as these excerpts from an article published on June 17, 2020:

“Scientists are still working to understand the ways people can catch COVID-19. An important clue to Dr. Richard Boucher, one of the senior researchers at the UNC School of Medicine, is that many people with COVID-19 lose their sense of smell. Previous research suggests that [over half of patients with COVID-19 partially or completely lost their sense of smell](#) while sick.

This suggested that the coronavirus could be especially active in the nose even when people don't show classic nasal symptoms like sneezing, runny nose, or congestion.

As a pulmonologist, Boucher sees many people with chronic lung problems get sick when germs from the mouth or nose accidentally fall into the lungs with fluids like saliva or mucus. This could mean that instead of launching a direct assault on the lungs, the coronavirus camps out in the nose, building up and waiting for some lucky drips to carry it down the sinuses and throat.”

“If the nose is where the coronavirus prepares to attack the rest of the body, we can fortify our nasal defenses to stop it from gaining ground in the first place.”

“Wearing a mask, even a non-medical one, blocks most large virus-carrying droplets that come out of the nose, like from a sneeze. And if the coronavirus is most likely to infect someone by getting into the nose, covering it makes the nose a harder target.

Wearing masks “really is a two-fer,” Boucher said. “You’re protecting yourself and you’re protecting somebody else from you transmitting something in an asymptomatic phase.””
(Diasio, 2020)