

**COVID TASK Force Recommendations to the MVUC Board of Trustees
Meeting of September 7th, 2022**

- 1. Mask-optional Environment for MVUC** – The COVID Task Force approved changing the masking requirements for MVUC from mask mandatory to a mask-optional environment in accordance with CDC guidance regarding community risk assessment (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>), personal risk assessment (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/understanding-risk.html>) and self-care (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>), while continuing to require adherence to the MVUC requirements for full vaccination and boosting, as appropriate for age. The relaxation of mask requirements would apply to Sunday services, rental functions, normal workday and volunteer functions, religious education functions and any other circumstances where individuals or groups assemble at MVUC for a variety of activities.

Fairfax County is currently listed as a low-risk community (Green Zone) and wearing masks is considered optional based upon individual risk assessment for individuals residing in Green or medium-risk community (Yellow Risk) zones.

Individuals desiring to continue wearing masks should be encouraged to continue to do so and should utilize only higher-efficiency masks such as N-95, KN-95 and KF-94 masks.

The Task Force thoughtfully acknowledged concerns raised by some congregants and Board of Trustee members that implementing the mask-optional recommendation might conceivably degrade attendance at Sunday services. Some Sunday service attendees may feel less secure if wearing masks is optional. Others have told us that that making masks optional would make them more likely to attend Sunday Services.

The Task Force members felt that fully vaccinated/boosted attendees, wearing high-efficiency masks in well-ventilated areas, should be protected to a highly practical and reasonable extent, and that the decisions regarding wearing masks should reside with individuals linked to their own personal risk assessments. The Board should consider assessing the potential impact of implementing this recommendation.

To address this concern, the Task Force encourages the Board to conduct a survey of church members, in an attempt to assess the risk to attendance associated with the implementation a mask-optional policy. The final decision regarding implementation of this option is a Board administrative function, not a health recommendation function, and the Task Force members accepted that the Board may not feel ready to take this step at this time. That is the Board's decision, and we support the Board in this regard.

The same concerns are relevant to adults and children attending religious education and spiritual growth experiences. Ann Richards will conduct a survey of parents regarding their views on conducting classes in the mask-optional environment, and ultimately the decision to move forward with this recommendation also rests with the Board of Trustees.

The Task Force also acknowledged that the CDC has stepped back from stringent recommendations regarding social distancing, while continuing to recommend that individual risk assessments based on age, underlying medical conditions, etc., and individual preference should inform personal decisions in this regard. The Task Force recommends that social distancing not be mandated for indoor activities, though individuals may wish to maintain social distancing of 6 ft., as appropriate to their individual risk assessments and personal circumstances.

N.B.: The Task Force did not address indoor dining at this meeting, but will do so at the October meeting.

2. Recommendations Regarding Musical Programs:

a. Playing of Musical Instruments:

- i. For the time being the Task Force recommends that musicians playing wind instruments utilize filters on their instruments (where possible) when performing, and that these musicians be placed at considerable distance from attendees during Sunday services.
- ii. Singers in choir should continue to wear masks for the present due to any potential risk of enhanced aerosolization of virus. Mark Zimmerman will survey choir members to assess their interests/concerns regarding moving to a mask-optional approach. The Task Force will review the results of this survey at the October meeting.
- iii. Choir members, soloists and wind instrument musicians should also adhere to the Task Force's Personal Care Guidelines and exclude themselves if they have any symptoms possibly related to COVID and/or have a positive rapid antigen test on the day of the service. Rapid antigen testing is not recommended for symptom free individuals unless they have recently been in close contact with anyone with COVID.

3. Recommendations Regarding Ventilation: The Task Force recommends that enhanced ventilation measures be utilized for all indoor activities, especially for Sunday Services.

4. Recommendations Regarding Nursery Childcare: When children 6-months of age and older attending day care have been fully vaccinated and boosted (as appropriate), then the mask optional recommendation is appropriate for nursery care workers.

Daniel L. Cohen
MVUC COVID Task Force Chair
Sept 11th, 2022