

Updated Mask Policy and A Pledge to Care

As the landscape of COVID shifts around us again, the leadership of First United Methodist Church of Tacoma is proposing to change our masking policy from ‘masks required’ to ‘masks encouraged.’ Remember, we do not know the health concerns or anxieties that people carry. Let’s be kind and gentle with how we approach one another. We continue to commit to the values that led us to our initial masking policy in the first place—the desire to protect each other, prevent community spread, and center the most vulnerable to COVID and other illnesses.

But what does ‘masks encouraged’ mean? Below are some guidelines that align with our continued commitment to care for one another that we recommend and inform our pledge to care.

Stay home when not feeling well. Your whole being is valued, so take the rest your physical body needs. Allow us the opportunity to show God’s love by being a community that honors and respects rest and healing.

As long as COVID is a concern and tests are available—when uncertain—test.
Stay home if positive for COVID.

Mask when someone in your household or a close contact is sick or has COVID.
Mask if you aren’t sure about the answer to the morning game of “allergies or cold?”
Mask when you are ready to go out at the end of a cold (at least 24 hours past a fever).
Mask if another requests it of you due to their own vulnerability or other reasons.
Mask if that is what you are most comfortable doing for whatever reason.

Respect personal boundaries. Check in with one another on whether you are both comfortable to wave a hand, share a fist bump, or exchange a hug. Keep a speaking distance of at least 3 feet, especially if one or both of you are unmasked. Let us be a community that slows down enough to check in with one another and respects each other’s boundaries.

Honor body autonomy. The choice to mask or not is deeply personal and often follows a complicated set of thoughts for each of us. Let us honor whichever choice is made by not commenting on that choice—whether it is wearing a mask or not wearing one. This will help us avoid shaming one another and normalize masking at appropriate times. May we be a community that always values minimizing the spread of germs as part of caring for one another.

Above all, always grace, love, and trust. These guidelines do not mean that we have the ability to always prevent the spread of sickness. Let us not be trapped by the white supremacy culture value of perfection. Even if we feel certain we know the origins of our illness or that we are the origin, let us always respond with grace and love. We trust that we are each making the best choice for community care that we can at each moment.

Pledge to Care

First United Methodist Church of Tacoma believes in the infinite value of every human. We recognize that people live with many health concerns. To honor all and to value those most at risk, we enter into a pledge to care for one another.

I pledge...

- to stay home when not feeling well.
- to test for Covid when uncertain about symptoms.
- to mask after close contact with someone who has Covid.
- to mask if someone asks me to.
- to mask for my own comfort if I feel the need.
- to ask permission before touching others and to pay attention to non-verbal communication about touch.

Remember, we do not know the health concerns or anxieties that people carry. Let us be kind and gentle with how we approach one another.