

## Covid Update for Congregation

Current data from the CDC and our local health department, shows the rapid spread and large number of cases in our community caused by the Omicron variant, as well as the continued spread of the Delta variant. Hospitalizations are on the rise, which includes unvaccinated and vaccinated individuals. The current positivity rate is fast approaching 20%, well over the 10% threshold. An article published in the Sarasota Herald Tribune on December 27<sup>th</sup>, states the following: "Sarasota County's Covid-19 cases up 224.6% and Florida's cases up 332.9%". This surge is most like due to holiday gatherings and travel, which do not include the upcoming New Year's celebrations. In addition, the church was informed earlier this week that an individual who attended the 7:00 pm Christmas Eve service developed Covid symptoms two days later and tested positive. The virus is definitely in our midst.

Because of the rapid spread and increase in cases from this ongoing pandemic, we once again need to take steps to keep our church family and guests safe while attending worship services. The mitigation guidelines listed below will be in place for the duration of this current wave of infection.

Beginning Sunday, January 2, 2022, the following guidelines will be in place on the St. Paul campus:

- ***Medical grade masks (surgical, N95, KN95, KN94) are strongly recommended***
- Social distancing is a must, refrain from sitting with someone outside your household and from shaking hands and hugging.
- Frequent use of hand sanitizer is encouraged.
- Communion will revert back to use of the kits while staying seated in the pews.
- Coffee hour following the worship service is temporarily suspended.
- When visiting the church office, masks will be required.
- If you are at high risk, online worship is encouraged.
- If you do not feel well, for example, you have a sore throat or cough, stay home.

Let's continue to care for ourselves and others by following the guidance above until it is safe to once again relax some of the restrictions. We continue to pray for all who have lost loved ones and who are suffering from Covid-19.

Safety and Emergency Preparedness Ministry Team  
Worship and Music Ministry Team  
St. Paul Lutheran Church Council