



A Pastoral Letter

January 16, 2022

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I have taken seriously that I am the pastor to the whole congregation regardless of political affiliation or Covid convictions. I now feel compelled to write because of the tremendous pandemic-related strain falling on brothers and sisters in Christ in our congregation.

Mixed messages about Covid have complicated our response. For some, Covid symptoms are like a troublesome cold while others are hospitalized with serious and sometimes lingering complications. Some view Covid response as an issue of personal rights while others urge action for the wellbeing of our community and country. Changes in the Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports as the science caught up to the virus have caused some to doubt the legitimacy of CDC guidance.

What we know is that:

- sadly, some within our community of faith have died from Covid while others in our fellowship grieve the death of loved ones and friends caused by Covid,
- many hospitals are again pressed to their limits,
- some in our church family are extremely vulnerable because of their age or an underlying medical condition; to them Covid is truly life threatening.

As we face the current omicron surge, the number of workers getting sick is placing great strain on some of our church members. One doctor from our church recently wrote,

“I have not seen the number of calls to my office and the number of positive tests we are experiencing at this time since the beginning of the Pandemic. However, the difference is that our own Health Care Workers are sick and the remaining staff is grossly over-worked and fatigued from nearly 2 years of this.”

Also, others are daily challenged. Church members who are teachers have had to develop and implement hybrid lessons for both in-person and remote learning. Parents have had to juggle work schedules as schools instituted remote learning to protect the health of children and staff.

There are steps we can, and should, take to help our Christian family as we persevere in this pandemic:

- if you are not vaccinated, talk with your doctor and reconsider being vaccinated; it is not too late;
- when in public wear a well-fitting mask worn over your nose and mouth;
- wash your hands regularly;
- speak lovingly with unvaccinated family members and friends and invite them to talk with their doctor and reconsider being vaccinated;
- check in with older relatives and neighbors who may be isolated by the pandemic;
- share an act of compassion with those whose work is affected by the ongoing pandemic: your doctor and staff, teachers you know, and others who bear the strain of a reduced workforce.

Pope Francis recently said that being vaccinated is a moral obligation. That call and knowledge of the ways that our Christian brothers and sisters are being affected is enough motivation to do our part to limit the spread of the virus and support those who are greatly affected by it.

Grace to you all, and

Peace,

*Steve W*