

## **ROGER'S RECOMBOBULATION AREA: New COVID Protocol - 03.16.22**

With various metrics rapidly improving, we will be making some major changes in our protocol in the next several weeks. As always, it's very important to understand that we will change our protocol again if conditions deteriorate or further improve. I have made these changes in close consultation with our medical advisory team and after conversation with staff.

Here are the changes:

- Mandatory distancing requirements and room capacity limits will be phased out over the next several weeks. Starting on March 20, distancing requirements will no longer be in effect for the two middle sections in the Sanctuary, with no rows roped off. Distancing requirements will still be in effect with rows roped off in the west and east sections on the main floor and the balcony. All distancing requirements will be discontinued on April 1. Individuals and families/pods are encouraged to create distance around them if they wish; placards indicating a wish for up to 6' distancing will continue to be available in the Sanctuary. Ask a Welcomer if you'd like placards to place to the left and right of you/your family or pod as well as in the pew in front of and behind. Since some among us are likely to still want some distance around them, it will be helpful to keep distant when interacting with others unless they invite you closer.
- The changes outlined above will make it permissible for those who wish to shake hands and hug, but it will be important to make sure that a person with whom you'd like to shake hands or hug is comfortable with this. How will you know if they're comfortable? Ask them for permission first!
- A "mask-free if all agree" policy will be instituted on April 1 for all adult small groups. This means that participants in individual Social Hour groups, classes and other small groups will have the option not to wear a mask if everyone in the group agrees. It will be important to cultivate a culture of consent where no one ever feels pressured. Everyone in a small group will need to be okay with the group staying masked if even one person isn't comfortable with others being unmasked.
- We will reinstitute passing the offering plate on April 3.
- Masking and distancing are no longer required for outdoor events. If there is singing, distancing of at least six feet when not in families/pods is required.
- Starting on April 1, we will no longer do contact tracing.
- Starting on April 1, finger food will be allowed. Small groups may have food of any kind if all agree.
- We will continue to allow up to three vocalists and/or wind instrumentalists to perform behind the plastic shield. If the performer(s) are up-to-date on COVID vaccination, they may choose not to be masked. We will no longer require a negative COVID test for vocalists/wind instrumentalists who elect to perform unmasked.
- Ensembles of up to 15 will be able to pre-record music at the church. They may choose to be unmasked if all in the group as well as our AV staff agree.
- Our religious education staff is empowered to make adjustments to the protocol as they deem necessary.

I note that our new protocol doesn't make masks optional in large events. Continuing the requirement to mask in large groups feels important given that some members of our beloved community are not able

to be vaccinated due to age (under 5) or other health conditions. Maintaining the mask requirement for large groups at this time helps us relax other guidelines as outlined above. I hope that we will get to the point sooner than later of no longer requiring masks for large groups.

This revised protocol and the continued presence of COVID19 in the world asks us to deepen an important spiritual practice: getting consent. Don't assume consent to get physically close to someone, e.g., to hug them or shake their hand. Ask first. This is a cornerstone of respecting the inherent dignity and worth of fellow congregants.

As always, I invite you to get in touch with me if you have questions or concerns.