

## WEEKLY EMAIL 12-30-21 – MESSAGE FROM DOUG



Last week I sent an email detailing heightened COVID regulations as stipulated by the COVID Response Team (CRT) due to the soaring incidences of infection due to the Omicron variant. If you follow the news at all, you'll know that records (and not the good kind) are being set daily. The only upside is that this variant is known to die out quickly. In light of that the CRT response is as follows:

1. **Mandatory vaccination requirement for entry** -- please be reminded that it applies to friends, family, visitors and not just members. **"Fully vaccinated" means all available doses including booster.** In other words, If you have not yet received a booster vaccine and your last dose of the original series was 6 or more months ago, please attend virtually. *(Please see note below regarding boosters!)*
2. **Everyone, two years of age or older, must be masked** when in the building. Single cloth masks are **not** protective against Omicron. Please double mask if you are wearing cloth, or preferably, wear a surgical or **N95, KN95, or KF94** mask. The church has surgical masks on hand.
3. This **virus poses increased risk** to the following conditions and persons affected should attend virtually:
  - Persons over 65, especially those with chronic conditions, or who have not received a booster.
  - Pregnant women
  - Anyone immunocompromised, regardless of age.
4. **Social distancing will be increased** by asking family units to sit together with lateral space in between families.
5. There will be **no congregational singing** for the month of January. Music will be provided by instrumentalists, soloists, and bell choirs.
6. **Sunday School will be virtual** beginning January 9 through the end of the month which also means **no Nursery Care**. (Confirmation Class may be a combination of in-person and virtual given the vaccination status of the members.)
7. The **Preschool** will open on Tuesday, January 18th.
8. The **staff will work remotely in January**. If you require access to the building, please call in advance and we'll make arrangements. Contractors and building staff will be working.
9. **Groups and 12-Step programs** who abide by the above are welcome to continue meeting.

Be well, stay safe, Happy New Year, and God bless!

P.S. The usual (and happier!) Weekly Email returns next week!

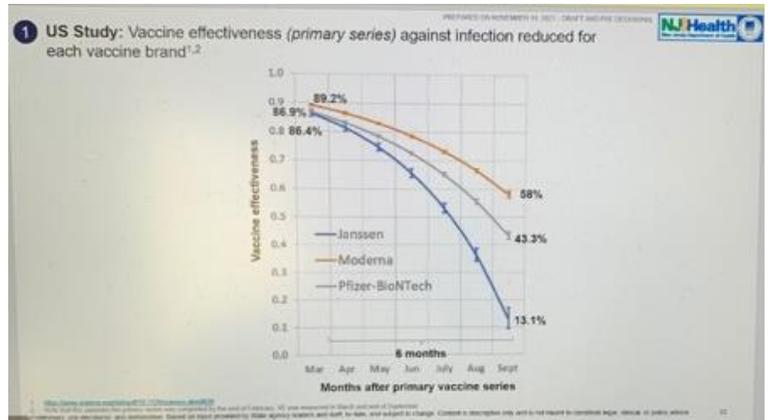
**Weekly Wisdom:** "There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered." *Nelson Mandela*

## Boosters ... do we really them?

*From Becky Bryan:*

Some of you may be wondering why our leadership is **strongly encouraging COVID-19 vaccine boosters** and is **no longer allowing cloth masks** to be worn inside our church.

**Boosters:** As you'll see on this graph from the NJ Department of Health, vaccine efficacy wanes significantly 6 months after the first series is completed. Additionally, if you had COVID in 2020 or 2021, the antibodies your body made in response to the infection would similarly wane, and would likely not recognize the current Omicron variant due to the number of mutations that have occurred.



**Masks:** Cloth masks are effective at blocking the exhalation of virus particles, but not sufficiently protective against inhaling them, according to experts including those at [Cleveland Clinic](#). This has become a problem with a virus as infectious as Omicron. While N95 masks are the most protective, they continue to be prioritized for healthcare workers (plus they are uncomfortable). Two high filtration masks are easily purchased online: KN95 (vertical pointy ones) and KF94 (origami ones). Once they arrive in the mail, test them by trying to blow out a candle while wearing one! Seriously, do this because unfortunately, there are plenty of counterfeits out there.

**The good news?** People who are vaccinated with boosters are not getting very sick - symptoms are ranging from a 24-hour flu to a mild cold and some are asymptomatic. This is bearing out in the numbers: while cases are up by 60%, hospitalizations have only increased by 16%. And if the numbers in South Africa tell us anything, this current wave will quickly burn itself out...just not in time for New Year's Eve.



**In the midst of dark days and no singing, here's some joy!**

Some of our youngest choristers, Carson, Allie, Mikey, and James, ready to lead in worship on Christmas Eve, with director Nancy Ruth Wainwright.

*Photo by Jen Gushue*