

## **NPC Congregational and Building Use Safety Protocol**

### **COVID-19 Update**

**Initial, August 17, 2021; Updated: September 12, 2021; September 16, 2021; November 20, 2021.**

At the direction of Pastor Dave and Nate, a committee of health care professionals was formed to review the current data on the Delta variant of COVID-19 and provide the Session with safety recommendations for worship and building use in the immediate future. The initial report, with recommendations, was submitted to the Session of NPC, reviewed and affirmed, at the Stated Meeting of the Session on Saturday, August 21, 2021.

Because of the ever changing environment during the extended COVID pandemic, prospective increases in caseloads during the winter season, and the concern for increasing caseloads in the previously vaccinated, the Committee reconvened the week of November 15 with the purpose of determining the need for immediate policy change or, if not, answering the question, 'What would have to change in order for NPC to modify its current safety protocol?'

Previous and Recent Data Reviewed for this Update (this is not exhaustive but exemplar):

1. The daily state positivity rate has increased from a low of 1.3% in July 2021 to 14.08% as of November 2021. The daily state positivity rate was over 20% in September 2021. The 7 day rolling average is over 15%. For Franklin county, the numbers are similar. Source: John Hopkins University.
2. On September 14, 2021, Governor Dewine, as reported by the Associated Press, made the public statement that he would issue a statewide mask mandate to slow spiking cases of the coronavirus if the legislature hadn't tied his hand through a strict restriction on public health orders (see Senate Bill 22, passed June 2021, restricting the Governor from any healthcare mandates apart from congressional support).  
<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/ohio/articles/2021-09-14/cincinnati-schools-require-covid-19-vaccinations-for-workers>
3. Hospitalizations are nearly all among the non-vaccinated. Hospital systems are also seeing vaccinated patients with immunocompromising conditions. Immunocompetent individuals who are vaccinated are developing breakthrough infections.
4. As of November 20, 2021, 58.87% of Franklin County's population is fully vaccinated; 63.65% have received at least 1 dose of the vaccine. This is higher than the state's overall vaccination rate. <https://data.democratandchronicle.com/covid-19-vaccine-tracker/ohio/39/>
5. Death and hospitalizations are not the only bad outcomes of Covid-19 infection. The effect on household contacts, particularly children, is significant. Even though children are unlikely to have a poor outcome, a child with covid leads to home quarantine, missing time from school and extracurricular activities, and sacrifices from the parents to accommodate the quarantine. Having acknowledged this truth, it is important to note that these untoward consequences are those experienced by those affected by household contacts forced to quarantine. There are also important consequences for those who are against vaccination and masking, either for the parents or their children, should they be forced to mask,

distance seat and pre-register for worship, etc. This is a complex issue that calls for understanding and sympathy from both sides.

6. There are ~2.538 million children in the state of Ohio under 18 ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)), and there have been a total of 14 deaths related to COVID 19 (as of November 20, 2021). That represents 0.56 per 100,000. 2016 article on all causes of death for children under 18 in the US from the New England Journal of Medicine tells us that this means that there are 10 major categories of causes of death (nationally) that are higher including: MVAs, Suicide, Homicide, Cancer, Suffocation, Drowning, Drug overdose, Congenital anomalies, heart disease, fires/burns, chronic lower respiratory illnesses  
<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMSr1804754>
7. NPC has, and will continue to offer, online worship for congregants concerned about infection and on-site worship.
8. NPC has always, and will continue to support those who choose to wear masks or distance because of health concerns or vaccination status, while worshipping on-site.
9. NPC supports individual choice regarding the COVID-19 vaccine.
10. NPC supports those who choose not to wear masks in circumstances in which mask wearing is not lawfully demanded.

**Updated Recommendations—Affirmed by the Session on November 20, 2021:**

1. The committee continues to encourage on-site worshippers, and those involved in other on-site events, to wear masks as a means of protecting themselves and those most at risk for severe or life threatening infection.
2. In response to the question, ‘What would have to change in order for NPC to modify its current safety protocol?’ The committee offers the following response:
  - A. Increase in mortality rate.
  - B. The COVID vaccination is shown to be ineffective at reducing hospitalization and mortality.
  - C. Local Hospitals become overrun by COVID patients.

**Signed by the Health Care Committee of NPC—November 19, 2021**