

Moving in the Right Direction

I have no doubt most of you are aware of the state & national changes that are occurring as related to the COVID-19 mitigation guidelines. At the end of June, in Pennsylvania, capacity limits for businesses & gatherings, as well as mask mandates, were lifted. The staffs of both the UPG & St. John's Windish Church are also keeping up-to-date on the changes.

As of Saturday, July 03, 2021, the Pennsylvania COVID-19 data is moving in the right direction. The statewide rate of positivity is 1.1%, with 6.7 cases/100,00 population. Lehigh County has a positivity rate of 0.8% & 5.7 cases /100,000 population, to put it in the LOW transmission category. (YEAH!) Northampton County has a positivity rate of 1.2% & 8.2 cases/100,000 population. That county remains in the moderate transmission category.

As such, beginning Sunday, July 4th, 2021, masks will no longer be required to be worn in church buildings. The choirs will be able to sing without masks. The congregations will again be able to sing hymns. Physical distancing will no longer be required between people from different households.

The question that is now running amok in my brain is one posed in a previous installment of these COVID articles. Where do we go from here?

To be honest, that is up to each one of us. At this time, based upon current CDC & state guidelines, it boils down to each individual's comfort level. You do not need to wear a mask indoors (as long as you are in a place where you are comfortable without a mask.) However, you may choose to wear a mask indoors if you want. You may sing along to the hymns in church (as long as you feel comfortable doing so.) However, you may choose to not sing if that is more comfortable for you.

The joint congregational councils have agreed to take baby steps as we attempt to return to a pre-COVID world. Those steps include agreeing to no longer require face masks; to no longer require physical distancing; to reopen our buildings to outside groups; to return to some in person, indoor meetings; & to begin using a modified process for communion utilizing the center aisle, wafers, & poured wine or grape juice. The councils have also agreed to keep up-to-date on the ever evolving COVID conditions & make appropriate changes, in one direction or another, based upon the data available at any given time.