

June 30th – What’s Changing, What’s Not (yet!) for Worship

Thank you so much for all of your feedback! And please keep it coming! If you haven’t yet filled out a worship feedback form, you can send it electronically via the feedback form in our eNews, or hard copies are available in the latest Intercom and at church.

Everyone wants to know – what will be changing now that the State has reopened? The Safe Start Task Force has been committed to making changes gradually, monitoring the change for a few weeks, gathering feedback, and then making further changes. Many factors play into each change, including:

- **Vaccination Rate of our County** - Thurston County is still below the target of 70% of those over 16 having initiated their vaccination series. (As of 6/29, we are at 61.4%)
- **Impact to Children** – Gloria Dei is proud to be an intergenerational congregation. We want children and their families in our midst! And we want to provide an environment that is safe for them to participate in while they are not yet able to be vaccinated.
- **Variants** – the Delta Variant is spreading quickly among the unvaccinated, including children under 12.

We heard your feedback, and are excited to announce some changes!

Here is what will be changing, starting with worship on July 4:

- **Registration no longer required** – but it’s still optional, and it helps. We still have to collect names of folks in the building for contact tracing purposes, and registration makes that faster at the door. But if you wake up on Sunday morning, and want to come to church in person, please come! We’ll just ask you to sign in when you arrive.
- **You can seat yourself, and leave when you’re ready** – no need to be ushered in or out. We’ll maintain some distancing between pews, but if you and another household are comfortable sitting in the same pew, you may! And if you want to stay in the sanctuary at the end of service to hear the postlude, you can.
- **Congregational Singing** – Lutherans gotta sing! We’re excited to include the congregation, singing praise to God!

Some changes require some time for logistics to be sorted, but we’re working on them!

Here’s what will be changing soon:

- **Communion Distribution** – we’ll need some communion assistants to make this change, so if you’d like to help, please contact the church office. *We’re hoping to start in mid-July.*

- **Fellowship Hour** – we hear you – you miss coffee and fellowship! We’re working on a plan to offer an outdoor after-worship fellowship *starting in mid-July*.

What’s not changing (yet!):

- **Masks** - The State Department of Health’s June 29th press release encourages masks for *“all people, including those who are fully vaccinated... in settings where children are present or expected to be present.”* Gloria Dei wants to provide an environment where children and their families can participate safely – and continuing to wear a mask for a little while longer is a way we can show our love for each other.
- **Distance Between Pews** – we heard your feedback! Not everyone is ready for full capacity. We’ll continue to monitor our attendance levels and have plans ready to adjust when need arises.
- **One Blended Service through the summer** – adding more services requires even more volunteer help; staff is taking some well-deserved vacations; and a blended service gives us the opportunity to meet other members (another reason for a fellowship hour soon!). Watch for a more familiar schedule in the fall...

Thank you for your caring patience as we gradually adjust to the changing health environment. We will continue to monitor area health metrics along with the impact of these changes in worship. We continue to value your feedback along the way. And we continue – most of all – to value your prayers for the Task Force, our Staff, and our Congregation.

Together in Ministry,

The Safe Start Task Force

Kelley Mannon, Pastor Doug, Diana Alfonso, Cornelia Kirkpatrick, Jim Broman, and John Tobin.