

Update

Given reports from the county health departments in our area and the vicinity regarding the rate of rise of COVID cases the elders recommend that everyone wear a face covering while in the building. This is a change from last week due to the information that has been made available in the last 48 hours. It has been reported that the positive cases have been traced to large gatherings and family gatherings.

It is widely accepted among the medical community that face coverings help prevent the spread of the virus. Face coverings help to protect others. If someone has the virus and is not wearing a face covering while in a public gathering it has been reported by infectious disease experts that there is a *6-fold increase risk of spreading the virus if that individual is not wearing a mask.*

Wearing a face covering is about protecting and caring for one another. Face coverings should not be worn by those 2 years old and under. When teaching a class, preaching, or leading singing the face covering can be removed during that time and they should remain 12 feet away from the nearest member while doing so.

We should continue to practice this and all other safety guidelines that are now in place until the risk of the COVID virus is significantly reduced. — *tr*

Just wear a mask... *please.*

I once asked a lady who wasn't wearing one why she was wearing a mask. I must have been really embarrassed, but I wasn't because I was only 4 years old. But my mother... boy, was she embarrassed...

"Masks" or "face coverings" have taken center stage, now that we are getting back to the building. It might surprise you to know that the elders have spent more time discussing this than any other aspect of the regathering. If that seems strange, we agree. Speaking for myself, I'm really tired of talking about masks.

We request that when you come to worship just wear one at the building; *please.* None of us want to argue about this and we certainly don't want to divide the church over it. If you really don't want to wear one, please feel free to stay home and participate via live stream at 9:45 AM. We will not hold that against you.

No one I know enjoys wearing a mask, though some of our medical professionals must wear them every day for hours on end. But there is a bigger issue than "wearing a mask." The aim is to protect each other from being infected with a potentially deadly disease. I think I know most of the people at Folsom and not one of us would want to be responsible for someone else getting sick. Terry has reminded us several times that people can have Covid-19 and not know it (they are "asymptomatic"). Since there is no cure for it, that puts all of us at risk. So, we take precautions: we wash our hands, we don't touch our faces, we keep our distance... and we wear a mask when in public.

Now the government is telling us we *must* do it in certain settings, not just recommending we do it. If you say, "I'm not going to let the government tell me what to do," what do you say to Paul's command to "be subject to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1)? He didn't say that we are to submit to them only when we agree with them. Peter says the same thing in I Peter 2:13-14 — "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution."

Several churches have been in the news lately because they ignored these guidelines and many of their members got sick. We want to spread the good news not *become* the news. How does disobeying the authorities on such a minor issue as wearing a face covering help spread the good news?

Again, the recommendation/requirement to wear a mask has always had a singular purpose: *to protect others.* Put into a congregational context, it is an expression of our love for each other. Paul said, "*Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*" (Romans 12:9-10). And this, from Philippians 2:3-4:

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. I don't know about you, but I can draw a straight line from "looking to the interests of others" to wearing a mask, if the mask keeps me from transmitting a dangerous disease.

— *dp*