

COVID-19 Task Force

May 24, 2021

Attending: Sara McCormack, Bob Beggs (Chair), Paul Friesen, Betsy Johnson, Greg Simmons, Pr. Chris Enstad, Tracy Dahl, Matt Wentzel, Rick Blum (staff) Sarah Iverson (staff)

The meeting began at 6:39 p.m.

At the top of the meeting, Bob stated he had 4 goals:

- *Not take up too much time;*
- *Continue the conversation;*
- *Trying to find a compromise acceptable to all;*
- *Get a motion sent on to the board.*

Bob reminded everyone that there was a motion on the floor from email conversations held on Sunday. Sara M. restated the motion:

"I move that the COVID-19 task force recommend to the GSLC board the following as of June 2:

Indoor:

- *eliminate the mask requirement, but encourage mask wearing by those who are unvaccinated, those who feel more comfortable wearing one, or those who would like to sing.*
- *Maintain social distancing in our seating*
- *~~Allow singing~~*
- *Eliminate capacity limits*

Outdoor:

- *Maintain social distancing in our seating;"*

Pr. Chris seconded the motion. Bob opened the motion up for discussion.

Sara said she wanted to hear all voices before we vote.

Paul F. agree that we need to move forward in terms of opening up. But he feels we're moving too quickly.

HE went and looked at the Dane Co. numbers, and we have a very high vaccination rate for people who are eligible. But it doesn't include all the 12-15-year-olds, and includes none of the 0-12 year-olds.

Youngsters can carry the disease, but they tend not to get seriously ill.

I think we're going to force parents to make a decision about whether to make their children interact with people that haven't been vaccinated.

Paul asked whether we are losing people from coming to church because they have to mask?

He says if we are, we also may be discriminating against parents who have to decide whether to mask their kids to take them to church..

Paul says he's ok with all the parts of the motion...except removing the mask requirement.

He also acknowledges we won't have a vaccine eligible for young children available likely until fall.

Pr. Chris – I am wondering where the line is drawn. Why does the church draw the line, when parents are taking kids everywhere else?

Sara – Is it the responsibility of the parents, or the church, for establishing the guardrails?

Tracy - If I read Sarah Iverson's email correctly, all the other churches mentioned (St. Luke's, Bethel, Midvale) are still keeping their mask mandates.

Matt – I lean more toward Pr. Chris. But I think it's too soon to make that decision. I think we should wait until June 2. My question is: what is the rush?

Sara – Would a lot of this discussion go away if the date was moved from June 2 to July 4?

Sarah I. – she thinks there's a smaller minority that won't come out if we get rid of the masks.

Pr. Chris - If we change the date, what are we using as criteria to lift the mask mandate?

Bob – said the statistics that Dane County is putting out is a little misleading. He says if you look at the category of vaccination rates of people who are eligible, the rates are higher than 70%.

Tracy – I would encourage pushing it back a month, because it would give the 12-15 age group a full month to get vaccinated.

Paul F. – He asked Bob to explain his observations...

Bob – As the leader of the committee, I can answer the first question about a delay, but I can't answer the question why, since the CDC and Dane County both say it's ok not to require them anymore.

Paul F. – as a congregation, we have all age groups, including a significant minority who can't be vaccinated – children. In schools, the teachers still have to be masked, even though they are vaccinated.

Tracy – after June 2, masks are recommended for teachers in Middleton. I don't know what's going to happen in the fall.

Betsy – Our school district (Belleville) brought a vaccination clinic in for students. And our school district has been following the Dane County guidelines. So, they said that as of June 2, they're lifting the mask mandate. They said they're doing it because they're following the guidelines.

Paul F. – If we decided to go that route, I would vote yes to extend it to the end of June.

Sara – There's no magic date.

Rick B. – He said he agrees with Bob's thinking that we should rely on the CDC and Dane County to help us make our decision. But he says this group has been able to lead by consensus for 14 months. And if there's something all of us could agree on, he thinks that is what we should do.

Pr. Chris – but what's the metric we can all agree on as a guideline?

Betsy - but what about 0-12? Extending a month seems arbitrary to me. Besides more 12-15-year-olds being vaccinated, what's going to change by extending it a month? The problem is there's no metric to base it on.

Tracy – I was thinking the same thing about the language. If we're going to get rid of the masks, we need to be clear with the language. I'm concerned about the singing.

Matt – KISS – (keep it simple stupid) I think we should let Sarah and Becca sing. I think we should regroup the week of June 2. If we do extend mask mandates past June 2, how are we going to enforce it?. We're on a slippery slope. It's hard to get people in under normal circumstances.

Paul F. – what do you think Sarah? Do you feel unsafe with unmasked singing?

Sarah I. – I trust the science. I trust the vaccination. It's not as hard to be around others as it was a month ago. I don't have a problem with people singing at me, but if the science isn't there, that's more concerning. I think it's about 2% what we do and 98% of how we do it.

Paul F. – Paul asked Bob and Sarah do we have to take a vote at this meeting, according to Robert's Rules of Order and the constitution? Bob didn't think so.

Pr. Chris - The biggest concern is how we get out of it. We have an awesome communications team. Our highest attendance events are once a week, so we can retool as we go along. But there is a Messenger and people will want answers on June 3.

Bob – I think we need to say something to the congregation in the next couple of days. The board has to make a decision. 4 people here tonight are on the board. We can take the feedback we got tonight to the board, and they can make a decision.

Sara asked Greg for his thoughts.

Greg – my initial thought that the CDC guidelines were that they were for fully vaccinated. We don't know how much exposure we're giving to others in the congregation. By not asking people to say whether they're vaccinated, we could have people at risk. A month delay will give us some more time learned by science and the CDC. My wife and I are fully vaccinated, but we're not coming to church without wearing a mask. Not making a decision for a while is prudent. But I will support whatever the majority decides.

Matt – I think we tell the board it's a split decision, but I will go along with what the board decides.

Bob – I didn't make goal #1 I stated at the beginning of the meeting. I'm happy with Paul F.'s suggestion that we don't take a vote and just give input to the board.

Sara – What that means, however, is that this group is deferring to the board to make a decision. And the motion the board votes on will not have been completely vetted. The board will have to do the wrestling.

Pr. Chris – I don't think the motion we voted on last Sunday reflected exactly what we were talking about. I thought we had consensus coming out of the meeting. And then it didn't seem like we had it.

Paul F. – I think we're unanimous that singing inside shouldn't happen without a mask. But that singing outside is ok.

Tracy – What if we change it to strongly recommended from required. That means we wouldn't have to police it.

Greg – if we have the requirements, we don't have to police it. We haven't been policing social distancing.

Matt – Places of private property can still require masks even after the Dane Co. requirement goes away.

Pr. Chris – people wore masks at the outdoor service, and they didn't feel called out.

Sara – there's a certain part of the population that only gets hard copies, so the Messenger is the only way they get information about what's going on at church.

Sarah I. – If we're making a big change, we could get a letter out to church. I think we can find a loving way forward. We have to speak the truth, and explaining this is hard.

Bob – has everyone gotten a chance to speak?

Bob asked for a motion to adjourn.

Greg moves, Tracy seconds to end the meeting. Motion Approved.

The meeting ended at 7:43 p.m.