

Smithfield Baptist Church Policy on Wearing Masks in Adult Worship Services

October 1, 2020

There are many requests to allow congregants to remove masks once seated in the sanctuary during worship services. The building ventilation is outdated (installed in the 1970s), and as stated previously by Barry Fletcher of Building Maintenance, "...does not lend itself to **any alternatives** and is **marginal with current masking**" (email to Church Council members, dated September 4, 2020). Barry's statement on the church's ventilation system is a vital point when considering the following facts:

- Virginia remains in "Safer at Home, Phase III."¹
- As of September 25, 2020, 13 health districts follow a declining [COVID] case trajectory, six have plateaued, and 13 show slow growth. Three health districts are now in the surge (New River, Western Tidewater², and Three Rivers).³
- According to the CDC COVID Science Update dated September 25, 2020, the case-control study analysis supports recommendations for consistent and correct mask-wearing, proper social distancing, and handwashing to lower the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection.⁴

Along with that of the church's ventilation system, the above information does not warrant any change in wearing masks.

Les Ballard
Church Council Chair
October 1, 2020

¹Safer at home: Phase three. (2020, July 1). Retrieved September 29, 2020, from <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/governor-of-virginia/pdf/Forward-Virginia-Phase-Three-Guidelines---8-21-2020.pdf>.

²Isle of Wight County, Southampton County, and the independent cities of Franklin and **Suffolk** in southeastern Virginia.

³N.A. UVA COVID-19 Model Weekly Update. (2020, September 25). Retrieved September 29, 2020, from <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/2020/09/25/uva-covid-19-model-weekly-update-16/>.

⁴Office of the Chief Medical Officer. (2020, September 25). COVID-19 Science Update. Retrieved September 29, 2020, from https://www.cdc.gov/library/covid19/pdf/2020-09-25-Science-Update_Final-Public-v3.pdf.