**Bearing Fruit – June 20, 2021**

**Covid Update**

We are Presbyterian Christians. That means when it comes to making decisions our Session, which is like an elected Board of Directors, takes action as a body on behalf of the congregation.

Presbyterian Sessions are composed of both Ruling Elders (elected by the congregation) and Elders of Word and Sacrament (pastors). We may look to our presbytery, The Presbytery of Chicago, for guidance, but they do not make our decisions. The pastor may make a suggestion, but the pastor does not make the decisions. An elder may make a suggestion, but an elder does not make decisions alone. Members of the congregation may make suggestions, but they do not make the decisions. Decisions for Southminster are made together by the Session. It is sacred work, though sometimes it may not feel like it.

As a result of much conversation, prayer, and discussion the Session of Southminster has made a decision to open our doors a bit wider as we consider what is best during the Covid pandemic.

Beginning June 20, 2021, people who are **fully vaccinated** for Covid-19 may dispense with masks and social distancing inside the church building. This means that masks and social distancing are no longer required for those who are fully vaccinated. The tape that marks pews as open or closed will be removed with the exception of the last 6 rows on the piano side of the sanctuary (the southeast section), which we’ll refer to as “the comfort section.”  This section is set aside for those who feel a need to keep their distance. The size of this “comfort section” may be adjusted, as needed, by those who serve on the Worship and Music Ministry. Worshippers may sit wherever they choose in the sanctuary.

**If a person is not fully vaccinated, they will need to wear a mask for the safety of themselves
and others.**

**Congregational singing will be permitted only for people who are wearing masks** (so even if you are fully vaccinated, you may wish to bring a mask to wear so you can sing). Duets and trios may sing without masks in the chancel.

Here are a few other things that have changed as a result of Session’s decisions: Bathroom doors may now be closed. Hand sanitizers will be kept available but no longer required at building entry. An offering plate will still be kept at entrance to sanctuary. An Usher/Greeter will take attendance. NO use of Friendship Pads, and no keeping of lists for contact tracing. **Communion will continue in individual cups picked up by congregants at the entrance to the sanctuary and disposed of upon exiting.**

In-person fellowship after services will continue outside, with no mask or social distancing requirements until Session approves moving back indoors. No food will be served at this time. We will continue Zoom fellowship hoping to connect our people who are not present.

Worshippers are encouraged to be thoughtful, non-judgmental, and supportive of people with various levels of comfort regarding Covid-19 precautions. In particular, unmasked worshippers should respect the needs of others who are social distancing. Our Session will continue to gather new information from the CDC and Chicago Presbytery. The next scheduled Session meeting is August 17.

Meetings are an act of love in a Christian fellowship. Sometimes it may not feel like it or look like it, but at the bottom of it all is the foundation of God’s love in Jesus Christ. Meetings require time, mind, and heart. Thank you to the Session for bearing the fruit of God’s love as we navigate the best way forward for us as a community of faith.