



*The United Methodist Church*  
*The Philadelphia Area Episcopal Office*  
(*Eastern Pennsylvania and Peninsula-Delaware Conferences*)

*Bishop Peggy A. Johnson*

*P.O. Box 820*  
*Valley Forge, PA 19482-0820*  
*(610) 666-1442; FAX: (610) 666-9181*



August 17, 2021

Trustees of Wesley United Methodist Church  
2540 Center Street  
Bethlehem, PA 18017

Dear Trustees of Wesley UM Church and Rev. LaBar,

I bid you grace and peace in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to encourage you to exercise extreme caution during this time of increased transmission of the COVID virus. Once again, we are faced with the difficult decision about returning to indoor masking and social distancing. We have an opportunity to model care for one another and especially the most vulnerable among us and our precious children. As we consider the church as the "Body of Christ," we are all the more compelled to make choices that consider care for the entire body.

The long-term vitality of your church depends on how you attract and disciple the next generation. Across our annual conference, many families are deciding not to attend churches where mask-wearing is optional out of concern for the safety of their children. The simple sacrifice of wearing a mask at church may make a difference for parents who want to protect the health of their children who are too young to be vaccinated. Increasingly children are falling victim to COVID with the spread of the highly contagious Delta variant. Prevention measures are more important now than ever as cases are rising quickly across the country.

It is my hope that you will wisely establish a universal mask requirement at Wesley UMC when your COVID positivity numbers are in the "high or substantial" transmission levels. Please do this out of love for Christ and for the safety of your flock.

Sincerely,

Bishop Peggy A. Johnson

CC: Rev. Steve Morton