

As many of you may be aware, on November 4, 2020, Janet Mills issued Executive Order No 16 20/21 which requires mask wearing in “public settings” even if social distancing can be achieved (e.g. PHYSICAL DISTANCING EXCEPTION TO FACE COVERING REQUIREMENTS REPEALED.) The term “public settings” is to be broadly construed and specifically includes houses of worship. After meeting last night, the elders agreed that Southwest Harbor Congregational Church should comply with the new order.

Therefore, while attending worship and all other church events, please wear a face mask in compliance with Order No 16 20/21. Currently, we believe this is the best way to be good citizens while we love the LORD and our neighbors as ourselves.

We intend to continue to gather on Sunday mornings to sing, pray, preach and show (a la communion) God’s word. As one congregant stated, “mask wearing does not define who we are as Christians.” The elders encourage everyone to attend Sunday worship services if they are able as the “gathering” is a means of grace which provides spiritual nourishment for our ongoing battle with sin and the salvation of our souls. It also demonstrates to the world the life-giving importance of the “gathering.”

Finally, there may come a time when we must ‘obey God rather than man’ (Acts 5), though we have not yet reached that point. However, in light of this mandate and the prospect of further restrictions, the elders have set aside time to explore the issue of when to enter into civil disobedience theologically on Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>.

Generally, there are two groups which have formed around the pandemic and executive orders. One that find themselves averse to any government oversight and another who are fearful of contagion and want all restrictions obeyed to the letter. Whichever side you fall on, the elders would remind you that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ and we need to love one another in the midst of any and all struggles in which God has placed us. Let us not allow the transient circumstances of the world to break apart the body’s unity which stems for our belief in Christ and Him crucified.

Sincerely in Christ,

The Elders of SWHCC