

GUIDELINES FOR CHORAL AND CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

After many hours of consideration of the advice and recommendations of public health experts, the scientific community, and our denominational leaders at both the district and national level, Hillside's leadership team has developed this brief outline regarding choral and congregational singing. We have arrived at this place after much prayer and discernment, bearing in mind that worship is not ours but belongs to God alone. Our leadership team acknowledges that we are all agreeing to assume a certain amount of risk by attending worship or any large gathering. At the same time, we must act with prudence in order to minimize the risk to the members of our congregation.

There is an ancient proverb that says, "To sing is to pray twice," and, indeed, the Wesleyan tradition was born in song. Simply put, we Methodists embody and experience our theology through singing the faith. From the beginning, the hymns of the faith have shaped our self-understanding and faith practice, and few churches embody that tradition as whole-heartedly and robustly as Hillside. Our worship is deeply enhanced by the proclamation of God's Holy Word through choral and congregational singing.

There seems to be ample evidence, however, to suggest that even when a mask is worn, singing creates a quantity of fine aerosols that can stay suspended in the air for long periods of time, move with air currents, and remain infectious for many hours, exposing virtually everyone within a building. **There is no way we can guarantee that you won't be exposed.** In consideration of the above, and to help minimize any potential unintended consequences, Hillside will, for the foreseeable future, adhere to the following guidelines:

- The singing of worship songs, hymns, and responses will be left to the discretion of the individual.
- Masks must be worn at all times, including while singing.
- The choir will not return until there is a way to safely do so.
- As always, those with health concerns or vulnerabilities are encouraged to continue worshiping in the comfort of their home.

Recognizing the deep emotional pain this may cause as we further delay beloved ways of being the church together, we make these recommendations prayerfully, with pastoral consideration in our minds and our hearts.