

Sacred Heart Parish Pastoral Council Zoom Meeting

July 31, 2021

Council members present: Alex Amado, Dan Canning, Rob Cassleman, Fr. Steve Dublinski, Lorraine Farrand, Aurora Horstkamp, Jim Lincoln, Eric Patera, Char Snekvik, Chair, and Charlotte Worthy. And Mary Sutherland, parish secretary.

Opening Prayer - Our Father.

Virus status report: There was a 75% increase in cases in Whitman County over the past seven days. Current daily new cases are 27.94 per 100,000 over seven days. Over 14 days we are at 36 per 100,000. We had two deaths and two new hospitalizations related to COVID-19 in the past week. Vaccination rates have not budged much. 37% of those eligible in Whitman County (12+) are fully vaccinated, 41% initiating.

Governor Inslee recommends indoor masking in areas where there is substantial or high rate of community transmission. Substantial is defined as 50 new cases/100,000. High transmission is >100 cases per 100,000. Yesterday the CDC said that 69.3% of US counties qualify for either and should resume indoor masking.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/cdc-says-americans-should-wear-masks-nearly-70-us-counties-2021-07-29/> By these standards, Whitman County would not qualify. It is probably better to be proactive and start masking indoors now so we don't reach substantial rates.

The delta variant is rapidly becoming dominant. Public health measures against it include masking of everyone, avoiding crowded indoor spaces, good ventilation, de-densifying and vaccination. We cannot rely only on vaccination, especially when 2/3 of Whitman County is unvaccinated. Not only does the delta variant have higher viral loads and higher transmission; it also lingers for 18 days instead of 13 days. Vaccinated people have equally high viral loads when infected as unvaccinated and can transmit to other vaccinated as well as unvaccinated. Most breakthrough cases will be mildly symptomatic. There are also studies showing it to be more severe (greater hospitalizations) compared to alpha. There is a link to a CDC slide show about the delta variant attached to the end of the bulletin email, and there is a link on our website on this page: www.sacredheartpullman.org/staff Go down to "Pastoral Council", it is just below these notes.

The council agreed that this information blunts a lot of the optimism we had earlier in the summer, and is very disappointing.

Measures the parish has taken recently: We added an 11 am indoor Mass. We kept the 10 am outdoor Mass so the 11 am wouldn't be too crowded.

Mass attendance:	4:30 PM (indoors)	8:30 AM (outdoors)	10 AM (outdoors)	11 AM (indoors)	Total
July 17 & 18	48	53	40	25	166
July 24 & 25	29	64	44	48	185

Just a few people have been sitting in the annex, so Fr. Steve moved one of the air purifiers from there to the church. We now have eight along the walls of the church. They are working well.

The number of people at the indoor Saturday Mass is an easy fit. There is high mask-wearing compliance at the indoor Masses. We haven't had to move the outdoor Masses inside due to smoke. If we do, the highest attendance outside recently is 66 at the 8:30 Mass, so that number will fit inside.

We have about half the number of air purifiers needed for the classrooms. We need to buy more. They can be ordered directly from Honeywell, and they have a discount if you order several.

The people at the morning weekday Masses are very spread out. On the weekend we've had some problems with people who come late and crowd into the back pews. We need to watch how the church is filling up, and stop people at the front door and ask them to go to the annex.

We've had just barely enough lectors and ministers to cover the four Masses.

Decisions about Masses: We will continue to require masks at the indoor Masses for the time being. We're glad we've been cautious; the delta variant is not friendly. We have plenty of disposable masks to give out if the Masses have to be moved indoors at the last minute and people don't have them.

Placement of air filters: There is a plan to eventually put air purifiers between the pews instead of just along the sides. Eric Patera and Don Snekvik found that it is possible to tap into the existing wiring through the classroom ceilings to add outlets to the floor of the church. They need to test the amperage to see if we would need to add a breaker box before doing that. It will be a few months at least before we are ready to spread the pews out again and move the air purifiers.

Vaccination Survey results: We received 168 replies, representing 374 parishioners 12 and over. Of those, 98% are vaccinated or in the process of doing so. That is a great response, and we need to carefully explain why we aren't going to stop requiring masks indoors.

We don't know how the return of WSU students will affect cases. 94.7% of incoming freshmen are fully vaccinated, but they don't know about the rest.

Feedback about indoor/outdoor Masses: Some people have said they are happy to be back inside the church. We've had a little bump in attendance. Some families are still going to other Catholic churches in the area. One parishioner said they wouldn't go to indoor Mass if they had to wear a mask. One parent was disappointed that other churches have been meeting indoors with no masks and giving communion from the cup while we are not. Should we do a parishioner satisfaction survey?

We've had a number of Hispanic families, but they haven't been here every week. Alex is sending them the schedule.

If the 8:30 Mass has to move indoors, the 10 AM Mass will also, because of setup.

Next meeting: Saturday, September 11, 10 am, on Zoom.

Closing prayer: Glory Be

Submitted by Mary Sutherland