

The following is the response of First Baptist Church to the most recent guidelines from the Jackson County Health Department that went into effect on August 9th, 2021. According to the Health Department, this new order, found [HERE](#), says under #4 that, “An individual in an indoor place of public accommodation must properly wear a face covering or mask.” A “place of public accommodation” is further defined under 3b of this order as, “any place or business offering or holding out to the general public, goods, services, privileges, facilities, advantages or accommodations for the peace, comfort, health, welfare and safety of the general public.” Here is where this definition is relevant for us: “Public accommodation *shall not* include a private club or a place of public accommodation owned and operated on behalf of a *religious corporation*, association or society.”

In other words, “religious corporations” or “churches” are exempt in this new order from the Jackson County Health Department. Therefore, in light of this order and the health situation surrounding Covid-19, here are the recommendations for First Baptist Church:

- Masks are encouraged but optional. Anyone who decides to wear a mask or not wear a mask will be supported in their decision.
- Vaccinations are optional and will be treated in a similar manner to masking. This is a personal decision and vaccination status will not be an issue for entrance to the church or for involvement in church activities.
- Hand sanitizer will still be available at the main entrances.
- All balconies will remain open to provide opportunities to social distance for those who desire to do so.
- First Baptist Church will, as always, be cleaned before Sunday services.

I hope that this clarifies any confusion that might be circulating regarding this most recent health order. Our desire, to the best of our abilities, is to honor the governing authorities over us (Rom. 13:1-7), ensure the safety of those who gather, respect the concerns of others, and most of all, honor Christ in worship.

If you have any questions, please contact the church office.