

# Announcement

September 12, 2022

## FOR CONGREGATIONS

1. **Mask-Wearing During Theocratic Activities:** Starting October 1, 2022, mask-wearing will no longer be strongly encouraged for those attending congregation meetings. Unless it is a governmental requirement, it will be a personal choice whether one wears a mask in order to protect his health while participating in any theocratic activity, whether indoors or outdoors. This adjustment also applies when in-person theocratic schools, circuit assemblies, and regional conventions resume in 2023.

2. We truly appreciate the extra caution that you brothers and sisters have displayed over the past two years by wearing a mask. However, as we enter a new phase of the pandemic, we find that the number of those seriously sick and hospitalized because of COVID-19 has significantly declined in many regions. Vaccines and medical treatments that reduce the risk of severe disease and death are now more widely available. Therefore, it is appropriate that we adjust our position on mask-wearing. It is the responsibility of each individual to determine how best to protect his health based on his personal circumstances. (Gal. 6:5) Of course, each one should show balance, reasonableness, and love so that we do not unnecessarily put others at risk by attending meetings in person if we test positive for COVID-19, display cold or flu-like symptoms, or have recently been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19.

3. Some may have strong feelings on mask-wearing. However, we respect one another by not forcing others to adopt our personal viewpoint. Neither do we judge others for their choices in personal matters. For example, when shopping we know that it would be unreasonable to demand that store employees or fellow shoppers comply with our personal preferences on mask-wearing. How much more should we show consideration for our brothers and sisters by refraining from imposing our own opinion on wearing a mask.—Rom. 14:10; **read Romans 12:10.**

4. We warmly commend each of you for doing your part to promote unity and peace in the congregation. Paul wrote: “I urge you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you should all speak in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you may be completely united in the same mind and in the same line of thought.” (1 Cor. 1:10) By “earnestly endeavoring to maintain the oneness of the spirit in the uniting bond of peace,” we avoid conflicts that could divide us.—Eph. 4:1-3.