

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students,

As COVID-19 cases continue [a strong downward trend in Kent County](#), and as our numbers at Calvin Seminary continue to remain low (no current cases in our community, only 20 cases overall since the start of the Fall 2021 semester), we are changing our COVID response protocols for the Seminary, effective today. These changes are as follows:

- Masks are optional when in public or open spaces around Calvin Seminary.
- Masks are recommended for classrooms, the chapel, and common spaces in student housing.
- Faculty and staff may choose to require masks in their offices or classrooms. We support the decisions of those who choose to do so.
- We support any student, staff, or faculty who choose to wear masks. For those who would like masks, including KN-95 masks, they are available in the President's Office and the Student Life Office.

Please note that we continue to encourage hand washing, social distancing, and other good health practices. We also ask that if you feel unwell, please stay home. If you have any symptoms, [please fill out our COVID reporting form](#).

## **Rationale**

In addition to [the falling case counts in Kent County, the February 16, 2022 recommendation from the Michigan Department of Health and Human services](#) (MDHHS), and our continuing low case numbers on campus, we are willing to change our policy because of our high vaccination rates among students, faculty, and staff (plus natural immunity from previous positive cases).

The guidance from the MDHHS, along with the falling cases in West Michigan, our high vaccination rates, and the availability of good masks, gives us confidence to proceed with relaxing our mask requirement at the Seminary.

Please know that we will continue to carefully look at data from West Michigan, Kent County, and our campus, as well as recommendations from the CDC, the MDHHS, and the Kent County Health Department (KCHD), to determine if any spikes or spread would indicate changing our policy.

As a COVID Response Team, we do not take these changes lightly. We continue to work diligently to provide a safe and healthy learning community. This means making decisions that will provide for good public health during a pandemic as well as providing an environment that enhances learning and community. We are confident that this change will enable us to live and learn together in a safe and healthy way.

Thank you for your diligence in following earlier procedures and protocols, which have kept our COVID numbers low. We now thank you for following these new guidelines,

including respecting those who choose to wear masks and those who do not, as we move into a new phase in the COVID pandemic.

Sincerely,

The COVID Response Team

Margaret Mwenda and Jeff Sajdak, Co-Chairs