

The First Presbyterian Church
1324 Marion Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

August 10, 2021

Dear Church Member,

The Summer Lecture delivered last Sunday during the Sunday School hour by Dr. Douglas Axe caused consternation among some of our church members. I was not present but have since listened to it. While the first half of the lecture was instructional, the second half employed the issue of COVID-19 as an illustration of the confluence of science and faith. And while he did not specifically say he was opposed to the vaccine, some of you concluded that he was. Research on Twitter seems to confirm his opposition. And he is at liberty to hold such a point of view.

As a church, we have studiously avoided taking sides on this or that aspect of COVID-19 and have followed the CDC guidelines as to in-person worship. Whatever our individual opinions may have been (or continue to be), our stance as a church has largely been governed by a "love thy neighbor" approach. We have strenuously tried to steer a course that ensures that our members feel safe while worshipping at First Presbyterian Church. The protocols we employed were put in place at the recommendation of a specially-elected committee, and all decisions were approved by the Session. For the most part, I have tried to keep from making my own opinions public. For what it is worth, my wife and I received both Pfizer vaccines, and I would take three more if offered! This is a personal choice of mine made prayerfully and in the interests of personal and communal health.

While the nuanced ethical point Dr. Axe was trying to make was valid, the example he chose caused deep divisions within our congregation and is not helpful in getting us through this extremely difficult season.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,



Derek W.H. Thomas
Senior Minister