

## COVID-19 Update from the Office of the Bishop - August 3, 2021

As the Delta variant of COVID-19 continues to spread quickly around the country, the CDC released new guidance for vaccinated individuals which notes that “to maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others, wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission” (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>). The CDC provides a map which identifies areas of substantial or high transmission. You can see the map at: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>. While the risk of serious illness is reduced by the vaccine, the Delta variant appears to be as contagious as the chicken pox, so additional precautions are warranted even for those who are fully vaccinated.

As you think about next steps for the health and well-being of those connected to your ministry, the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop encourages everyone to:

1. **Get Vaccinated!** The vaccines are highly effective, extremely safe and free to everyone. Getting vaccinated will help protect you against the most serious effects of COVID-19. Getting vaccinated will help protect your neighbors including children and those unable to be vaccinated. Getting vaccinated is the best way to safely return to worship and other activities.
2. **Follow CDC Guidance!** The CDC is monitoring the transmission of COVID-19 and adapting guidance in response to what is happening in each community. You can learn more about current CDC guidance at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.
3. **Remember we are the body of Christ and individually members of the body.** As you make decisions, consider the impact of those decisions on the wider community. While it may feel safe to sing unmasked in worship, for example, that decision could negatively impact another member of the community by putting them at risk or by making them feel uncomfortable or even unwelcome at worship.

Each community is different, so unlike at the beginning of the pandemic it is impossible to present a single response that is appropriate in each community, but by getting vaccinated and encouraging others to get vaccinated, by following CDC guidance, and by caring for your neighbor, we can make strides toward returning safely to the activities we all love.

