

**Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop**  
**September 21, 2021 COVID-19 Update**



Dear Siblings in Christ,

I bring you greetings from all of us in the Office of the Bishop of the Virginia Synod.

While we had all hoped to be emerging from the pandemic by fall 2021, the emergence of the Delta Variant has created a completely new and dangerous phase of this pandemic that is impacting all of our plans for ministry.

To help demonstrate our care and concern for the whole community, the Virginia Synod Office of the Bishop encourages everyone to:

- **Get vaccinated!** We urge you to use your voice with members of your congregation and in the communities in which you serve to encourage everyone who can do so to get a vaccination. This is the best and fastest way out of this pandemic. We need to reach 70-80%+ full vaccination in every corner of the Synod.
- **Wear a mask indoors and follow all [CDC](#) and [VDH](#) guidance.** While fully vaccinated individuals typically enjoy protections from the worst side effects of COVID-19, masks help to limit the possibility of breakthrough infections for the vaccinated and provide a simple, but effective, form of protection for the unvaccinated. Under CDC guidance, everyone in Virginia over 2 years old should be wearing a mask when indoors. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>)
- **Use alternatives for indoor and in-person gatherings when alternatives are available or practical.** Some meetings and gatherings are far more effective and efficient in-person, but as we have learned over the last 18 months a tremendous amount can be done digitally.
- **Continue to provide online worship opportunities.** For many people, digital worship opportunities are a critically important way to connect to God and to one another when they do not feel safe gathering in-person. If providing both an in-person and digital worship experience is becoming unmanageable, consider partnership with Peace and Hope, the Virginia Synod's digital new start offering traditional Lutheran worship each Sunday (<https://www.peacehopeva.org/>).

Sadly, dear family in Christ, we need to do all these things - just when we hoped we would be free of all or most restrictions. In story after story across our Synod and the ELCA we are hearing of loved ones, including rostered ministers, who are infected. Many are quite ill and some have died in recent weeks.

It may not be the "Rally Day" we had hoped and planned to observe, but we do need to once again do all we can to protect ourselves and each other, especially our children, the ill and the elderly in our homes and communities.

I thank God for all of you and for all you are already doing. I know it is exhausting, but it is still critical to think through the best ways to protect our communities. We join you in this. Our Synod events are also planned with care, caution, and appropriate CDC guidance as a priority.

We are keeping you in our prayers and stand ready to offer you our support. Please call on us if we can help.

Peace!

Bishop Robert F. Humphrey