

August 3, 2021

## **FROM BISHOP HAYNES AND THE HEALTH ADVISORY PANEL**

Unfortunately, the Coronavirus is upon us again, this time in the form of the Delta variant. Cases are on the upswing and percent positivity is rising again. Bishop Haynes convened the Health Advisory Panel on Monday, August 2 to seek their counsel.

The Health Advisory Panel offered the following website as a resource:

<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

This map tracks by county the level of transmission risk in each state from low to moderate to substantial to high. This can be tracked on a daily basis by county. **The CDC recommends that indoor masking continue in places where the transmission risk is high.**

Additionally the Health Advisory Panel offers the following resource:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

This is a list of guidelines from the CDC for people **who are fully vaccinated.**

**At this time the Diocese is not imposing any diocesan wide mandates. Congregations are encouraged to monitor the transmission risk in their area and to mandate indoor masking if the transmission risk is high. Congregations are further invited to monitor percent positivity rates in their areas and to consider what further restrictions they might impose if the percent positivity rate rises above 8%. AT THE VERY LEAST INDOOR MASKING SHOULD BE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED IF NOT MANDATED DURING PUBLIC WORSHIP.**

The Health Advisory Panel notes that the rolling 7 day average of cases is increasing dramatically as each day unfolds. Anecdotally a substantial number of cases are considered breakthrough in that they are being found in people who are fully vaccinated. The Health Advisory Panel expects that the rise in Delta variant cases will peak in late August, early September.

Many congregations are already returning to some of the protocols which were in place prior to May 15 when all restrictions were lifted. Each congregation, in conjunction with clergy and vestry, should decide their own protocols with the following guidelines:

- **Masking, even for fully vaccinated people, is strongly advised.**
- **Social distancing should be observed where possible.**
- **Attention should be given to ensuring adequate ventilation.**
- **Services should be shortened where possible.**
- **Any congregational singing should be with masks.**
- **Any coffee hour observed should be with individually pre-packaged food and drinks.**

**PLEASE CONTACT THE DIOCESAN OFFICE WITH QUESTIONS OR IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE IN DECIDING PROTOCOLS.**