

September 3, 2021

GUIDANCE REGARDING THE DELTA VARIANT SURGE

We are now about 18 months into learning how to be the Church during this pandemic. As the Delta variant causes a surge in cases, many are seeking guidance regarding worship and fellowship. The Diocesan Office continues not to impose mandates at this time, but to offer the following cautionary advice and recommendations.

According to the data and map posted by the Virginia Department of Health [here](#), every county in our Diocese of Southern Virginia is at the highest transmission rate for Covid-19. Most counties (with the exception of a handful) have percent positivity rates over 10%.

This means that church leadership, along with their health equity teams, should be continually assessing safety regarding worship. Because the situation is volatile and changes rapidly, decisions should be reassessed each week. At the very least, the Diocese recommends the following:

- Strong advice, if not mandate, that masks be worn indoors.
- Singing, if done indoors, should be by masked individuals only and congregations should consider limiting the number of verses of each hymn that is sung.
- Service times should be shortened to 30-40 minutes, particularly if singing is part of the service.
- Adequate ventilation should be attended to; and, if possible, outdoor worship is safest.
- Physical distancing should be observed.
- No physical passing of the peace, collection plate, etc.
- Communion should continue to be administered in one kind only or with individually prepared containers.
- Continued efforts to offer technological alternatives to in-person worship (live-stream, pre-recorded, Zoom, etc.)

A Word about the Vaccine

While there is much political debate about the vaccine, the purpose of this communication is not to engage the debate but to offer the following information regarding vaccination:

According to the Virginia Department of Health, people who are unvaccinated contract Covid at the rate of 13.3 times that of fully vaccinated people and 2.6 times the rate of partially vaccinated people. Among the vaccinated population, 0.2% have contracted a break-through case, 0.009% have been hospitalized and 0.0017 have died. These data might suggest that the vaccine offers protection against the virus not only in terms of protecting folks from contracting the disease, but in mitigating the effects of the disease that might cause hospitalization and/or death. [Click here](#) for more information from the Virginia Department of Health.

“If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interest of others.” (Philippians 2:1-4)