



## St. Mary's Episcopal Church

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The Wednesday after the 13th Sunday after Pentecost; August 25, 2021

Dear St. Mary's Parish Family,

The Delta variant of COVID-19 has spread widely across our nation and, indeed, in our community. Today, there are 3,342 people reported to be hospitalized with COVID in North Carolina. Earlier in the summer, we had great reason to plan for a full return to many of our indoor activities at St. Mary's this fall. Unfortunately, out of an abundance of compassion, we are reconsidering those plans and rethinking how we should continue to gather safely as a church family. I write to share these measures. Please note that these decisions have been made in consultation with the Vestry and medical professionals in our community, and we will be re-assessing them at September's Vestry meeting.

1. We continue to affirm and recommend that all who share time with others at the church follow the current CDC guidance regarding face coverings. At this time, the CDC guidance is that all persons 2 years old and older should wear a face covering indoors, vaccinated or not. That said, all worshippers are welcome at St. Mary's regardless of their decision regarding face coverings. The phrase "**All may, some should, none must**" remains.
2. Social distancing while indoors will be encouraged during this time in the following ways:
  - a. Every other pew in our worship spaces will be open and available for seating. This could accommodate the 6-ft spacing recommended by the CDC (unless an individual sits directly behind/in front of another) and will accommodate the 3-ft spacing that the WHO currently recommends.
  - b. Half of the open pews available for seating will have a blue 6-ft long "love your neighbor" stick that has served well as an easy visual cue to see how far 6-ft is. Worshippers are encouraged to sit in those pews if they prefer to have that extra space.
  - c. Communion will be brought to worshippers in their pews at this time, rather than at the altar rail.
3. We will hold our 9:30am liturgy **outdoors** on the 2nd and 4th Sundays in September (Sep. 12 and 26). After the program year begins on Sep 12, Sunday School classes will begin at 10:30am.
4. Given the challenges of social distancing and face coverings while eating indoors, we are postponing the planned return of Sunday Morning Breakfasts and Wednesday Night Suppers.
5. We will continue to offer weekly online liturgies on our [Facebook page](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

In Christ's love,

The Rev. Thomas P.H. Warren, Rector