



Good Samaritan

ANGLICAN CHURCH

May 22, 2021

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being 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 count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:1–4, ESV)

Dear Friends in Christ,

I write to you today with deep love, affection, and compassion for each of you. This has been a difficult and confusing season. From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have sought to preserve the health and safety of our congregation, especially those among us who are most vulnerable. **I am deeply thankful to be able to say that we have not had a single COVID-related death in our membership, nor am I aware of any transmission related to a Good Samaritan event or worship service.** Thank you all for your help in this through abiding by our COVID policies, and thanks be to God for his protection and mercy!

Last week the CDC made significant changes to their guidance for vaccinated individuals saying that they “can resume activities without wearing a mask or staying 6 feet apart, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.” Many of you are rejoicing over this new guidance, but I also know that these new recommendations are causing others of you to feel less safe.

The available vaccines have proven to be extremely effective in preventing severe illness and hospitalization, and the data is indicating that vaccinated individuals have a significantly reduced risk of unknowingly spreading the SARS-CoV-2 virus to others. I rejoice in this! However, **I want us to be mindful of the fact that the Pandemic is still a significant threat for those who have not been vaccinated, and there is still the possibility of a new surge,** as is the case in places like India.

A large percentage of our congregation has now been vaccinated, but some have not and quite a few cannot be vaccinated yet. Also, as I write this letter, only 26% of the people in our county are fully vaccinated. Please continue to pray for the end of the COVID pandemic.

Today I and your vestry are announcing Phase 3b of our plan for regathering which takes into account the latest information from both the CDC and the leadership of the Gulf Atlantic Diocese. This new phase will begin on Monday, May 24. **This Sunday, May 23, we will still be in Phase 3a. Please wear a mask and practice social distancing, even if you are fully vaccinated.** This is an act of love for one another to give us all time to understand the new phase and have time to adapt. We don't want anyone to be surprised or caught off guard.

Phase 3b gives specific guidance on many things, and I encourage you to read the whole document, but most significantly, **“For those who are fully vaccinated,¹ mask-wearing and social distancing [will be] optional... For those who are not vaccinated, we respectfully request that you continue to wear a mask and practice social distancing, both for your own safety and for the safety of other unvaccinated people around you...”** There will no longer be roped off pews on the Gospel (left) side of the church. **Alternating pews will continue to be roped off on the Epistle (right) side of the church and this will be considered a “safer zone” where masks and distance between households are required.**

Some of you may feel that this new phase does not do enough to relax restrictions while others may feel that it goes too far. For the sake of the unity of our church and out of love for one another, let us all lay aside our own desires and opinions and be “of the same mind” in how we move forward as a congregation. I urge you all to heed the words of St. Paul, *“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others”* (Philippians 2:4, ESV). Please be respectful of your brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all trying to find our own way through this difficult season. If you have any questions or concerns, please call me (904-295-7732). I would love to hear from you.

Grace and Peace,

Canon Chris+

The Rev. Canon Christopher M. Klukas

Rector

¹ According to the [CDC](#), “People are considered fully vaccinated: 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen vaccine. If you don’t meet these requirements, regardless of your age, you are NOT fully vaccinated. [Keep taking all precautions](#) until you are fully vaccinated.”