



# Upstate New York Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

August 8, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Grace to you and peace from the One who makes all things new, Jesus Christ, crucified and risen for the sake of the world.

As you well know the Covid 19 virus is not going away anytime soon, in fact, it is becoming more virulent and deadly than it has been in the past. In its present form the Delta Variant has morphed into a more aggressive and deadly form from its previous iteration. The number of young people hospitalized has become a great concern since there has not been an approved virus for those under the age of 12. Hospitalization rates are rising at an increasing and alarming rate to levels not seen since last summer. Florida and Texas have become the epicenters of the virus as hospitals create new wards for Covid patients. Under-vaccinated areas are exploding with the virus and it spreads more easily than ever. Breakthrough cases for those who have been vaccinated are on the rise and concerns for the next variant are concerning. *“Authorities in South Korea confirm its first two cases of the “delta plus” variant, also known as AY.1 — a relative of the main delta strain that experts fear could be even more transmissible and potentially resistant to antibody treatment.”* And those who have been vaccinated can be spreaders of the virus without knowing it.

In a news report of August 4 the following was written: “The daily number of new coronavirus cases in the U.S. could double in the next few weeks, potentially resulting in new mutations that could be worse than the highly contagious delta variant, Dr. Anthony Fauci warned Wednesday.” In fact, in the South Bay in California a new variant has been detected.

In light of the above and more I began wearing masks again in public places like stores and post offices, etc. I understand it as part of my responsibility to care for others. There are many who cannot get vaccinated due to existing conditions and lack of a vaccine for folks such as our young people. I preached in one of our congregations this past Sunday and was relieved, upon arrival, to learn that masks were required in the Sanctuary. Virtually every congregation I've been involved with as a Pastor and Bishop have had the strong desire and stated that desire to find a pastor who can bring in more young people and families. That being a given raises the question of how we care for them, those who are most vulnerable in these days.

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This battle continues and, in fact, seems to be worsening and the virus winning. Yet we have the opportunity to help defeat it by being vaccinated and by caring for others in public places. Please follow the directions of the CDC, state of New York and county medical authorities. Check on the web sites. Err on the side of caution. No one wants to wear masks, even me, but if it assists a brother or sister or sibling it is within the realm of what I am called to do as a person of faith.

For the sake of all it's a simple thing to wear a mask. It saves lives, It cuts down on transmission. It makes a statement that others are important and the call to compassion can be lived out simply and gracefully.

Let us pray.

We pray for your love and compassion to abound as we walk through this challenging season.

We ask for wisdom for those who bear the load of making decisions with widespread consequences.

We pray for those who are suffering with sickness and all who are caring for them.

We ask for protection for the elderly and vulnerable to not succumb to the risks of the virus.

We pray for misinformation to be curbed that fear may take no hold in hearts and minds.

As we exercise the good sense that you in your mercy provide, may we also approach each day in faith and peace, trusting in the truth of your goodness towards us. Amen.

[www.Jesuitresource.org](http://www.Jesuitresource.org)

In Christ's Peace and Hope,



The Rev. John S. Macholz  
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