



¹³Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. ¹⁴Let all that you do be done in love. 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Friends in Christ,

By now you are all aware that the Delta variant of Covid-19 is spreading rapidly. Just this week Wisconsin reported the highest number of positive cases since February. In addition, the percent of positive tests has gone back up to 7% after falling to below 1% in June. The trends are concerning.

The CDC is now recommending that both vaccinated and unvaccinated people mask indoors in areas with significant community spread. Several of the counties within the South-Central Synod of WI are nearing or within that range already.

Additionally, all along this pandemic we have been reminded that as Christians we are called to love our neighbor. Many of our neighbors cannot yet receive the vaccine as they do not qualify because of age or health. They are at increased risk. It is our call to love and care for our neighbor.

As much as we yearn for this pandemic to be over, it is not. We are tired, but we cannot quit right now. Now is the time to reassess what we can do to best love our neighbor. Now is the time to be in conversation about what it will take to get through this leg of the journey. And we need not be afraid our God walks with us.

The Synod staff is once again committed to working from home as much as possible. We will be scaling back our in-person meetings. This limits contact for us and for others who may be vulnerable. We also encourage you to evaluate your in-person meetings and consider meeting via Zoom as much as possible. We also encourage masking indoors. Many congregations across the synod have moved away from masking, but it is time to have this discussion again. The same is true for singing. We encourage you to convene your Covid task forces and worship committees to reassess safety plans.

Please also continue to encourage vaccination. Vaccines are available. Help people get to them. Help people understand that they are the way through this pandemic back to the "normal" that we crave.

You are in my prayers. I know of your resilience and of your love.

Bishop Joy