

## SELCA COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAM UPDATE

Your COVID-19 Response Team met Monday, August 9<sup>th</sup>, to discuss the ramifications of the recent changes in virus data along with the medical guidance regarding these changes. Data shows that Cochise County is now in the “Substantial” category in the spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19 (see <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view> for latest info) and is also in the “High Risk” status according to [www.covidactnow.org](http://www.covidactnow.org), which has been one of our main sources of data about the pandemic. When an area has reached the “substantial” or “high” rate of spread, the CDC recommends that *everyone*- including vaccinated individuals- wear masks in indoor public spaces. Our Grand Canyon Synod Bishop Hutterer, in her August 5<sup>th</sup> letter, also said, “Consistent with past communications from this office, I encourage you to follow the [CDC guidelines](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/s110320-covid-guidelines.html).”

Because of that, and how we have said all along that we would follow the most accurate data and medical recommendations we could, we are asking as of Sunday, August 15<sup>th</sup> that everyone two years and older, whether vaccinated or not, wear a mask while indoors on church property. This applies to all groups using our campus and also precludes any fellowship events involving food, unless they occur outside, such as coffee fellowship on the patio. We will review and reassess this decision on September 7, 2021. We will also return to partaking of communion in the pews and not at the altar. We trust that there is understanding and appreciation for just how painful and difficult this decision is. It had appeared that we were just turning the corner on the pandemic and beginning to breath more easily when this new variant hit and has spread so rapidly across the nation. But, since for the last sixteen months we have taken on the solemn responsibility to ensure that everyone is kept as safe as possible- especially the most vulnerable- and that we are called by God to “love our neighbor as ourselves,” we believe it is necessary, however dismaying it feels. We ask for your patience and prayers. We WILL get through this with God’s strength and each other’s caring support. As always, we welcome your questions and comments by emailing or calling the church office or talking directly to one of our Response Team members. And remember, the sooner that everyone gets vaccinated who can get vaccinated, the sooner we’ll get through this pandemic.

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