



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS <sup>OF</sup> ATLANTA

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## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΑΣ

May 19, 2021

My Beloved concelebrants in the Lord, esteemed Parish Council Presidents and members, Philoptochos Presidents and members, Revered Monastics and all the faithful,

*Χριστός ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη!*  
*Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!*

I greet you with love and joy in the name of our Risen Lord and Savior Christ! I pray that the Paschal light of hope and peace continues to burn brightly in your hearts, for the remainder of the season, and all the days of your lives.

Following the recent update from the CDC concerning the use of masks, our Metropolis has received many questions about how this guideline applies to our churches. Beyond giving a simple "yes" or "no" answer, it is important to consider the full text of the CDC's guideline, which reads: “**..fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask or physically distance in any setting, except where required by federal, state, local rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.**” Using God-given discernment, there is no practical (or indeed, legal) method by which any parish may determine which parishioners have been vaccinated, and which have not.

Therefore, after much thoughtful discussion, it was determined that the Metropolis will continue to ask our parishes to abide by the recommended CDC, as well as federal, state, and local guidelines, in a spirit of good faith. In the instance of this specific mask update, **those who have been fully vaccinated, and wish to forego masks, may do so; just as we ask that those who have not been fully vaccinated to continue wearing masks. Finally, those who have been vaccinated (whether only partly or in full), and wish to continue wearing masks, may do so as well. Until CDC guidance is issued concerning those who have previously had COVID-19, we ask that those individuals continue to wear masks as well.**

The lack of any official "ruling" is meant to stress our Orthodox spirit of love, and not a spirit of legalism. To say that masks are no longer encouraged, or allowed, would possibly create a greater burden for those parishioners who have not yet been able to receive the vaccine, those who continue to exercise care in large gatherings, as well as respecting those who have not decided to be vaccinated. We as Orthodox Christians are not here to judge our fellow men, but to support and uplift them, and one of the means to accomplish this is by creating a space where all feel *safe* communing with our Risen Lord.

Therefore, as human beings who have been granted God's great gift of free will, my prayerful expectation is that our Clergy & Parish Council work together and continue to treat the individual decisions of their congregants with the respect and encouragement worthy of the Body of Christ. I remain,

Yours with paternal love and blessings in our Risen Lord,

+ ALEXIOS  
Metropolitan of Atlanta