
Welcome Back!

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Rev. Sam Candler**

Welcome back to safety and health! Welcome to Salvation!

“Usually,” this is the time of year when we are welcoming you back to school, and back to church, after some sort of summer break. It might have been a short summer break, or a long one, but it was a break.

“Usually,” even when we have no young people in our homes entering some school or another, our lives take a turn towards renewed routines in late August and September. “Usually,” it’s time to look at fall schedules, no matter what age we are.

“Usually,” we say “Welcome Back!” Welcome back to the establishment of new routines, with great new people and great new programs at the Church. Welcome to what we are this fall!

Well, this fall is not “usual” at all; most of us have little idea of what our new routines will be. Some schools are resuming in person. Some schools are resuming “virtually” (though I rather dislike the present use of the word, “virtual;” we should be saying “online” or something!). So, some schools are resuming online. Some schools may well begin in person but then be forced to retreat to online methods.

At the Cathedral this Sunday, we are saying simply “Welcome Back.” What we mean is “Welcome back to safety and health.” We are praying for safety and health this fall. During this Sunday’s online liturgy, we will be especially mindful of our children and youth. Canon Lauren Holder’s sermon will be especially adapted for younger persons. I will celebrate the Eucharist, and I will offer a special “backpack blessing” that will be a prayer for safety and health. Various younger members of our congregation will be our lectors and intercessors. And, throughout our liturgy, we will be showing the contributed photographs of our members with backpacks and book bags and briefcases. (Contribute a photograph!)

What I would long to see this Sunday, of course, are your faces! I have seen some of you, around church, in the last few weeks. Our atrium doors are unlocked, and the Cathedral nave is open, for meditation and prayer, but according to clear guidelines! We must limit our number of pray-ers and pilgrims to 10, at any one time! Thus, we ask anyone who enters to wear a mask, and to check with our security guard at the Welcome Window and to sign your name (in the interest of tracing safety).

I would love to see more of you! Our time without in-person community, and in-person communion, has been far too long. Somehow, when I see your faces, I see safety and health. And that is what we pray for these days, safety and health.

We want to re-engage. We want to see each other. We want to touch each other! But we want to do all that with safety and health. Fundamentally, that is what Church is supposed to provide: Salvation! The word “salvation” can mean “wellness.” For, the word “salve,” which we use for healing, has the same root as our word, “salvation.”

So, this Sunday, we continue our ongoing welcome. I welcome you to the Cathedral Parish of St. Philip, a place of physical safety and physical health, and also a place of spiritual safety and spiritual health. We are still unable to conduct in-person worship or in-person education opportunities; but, we are creating tremendous opportunities for online community. We are a safe and healthy community. As a House of Prayer for All People, the Cathedral of St. Philip is, primarily, a Community of Prayer for All People!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Sam Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip

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