
Homecoming! (and Illness, Ugh!)

**An article for *The Cathedral Times*
by the Very Rev. Sam Candler, *Dean of the Cathedral*
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Welcome to Homecoming 2024 at the Cathedral Parish of St. Philip! Thank you for being with us **this Sunday, August 11**, as we resume our program year of renewed education and community, renewed mission and outreach, renewed worship and music –and renewed health!

I hope that various members of our community have had an opportunity for some rest and renewal this summer. I know that not everyone is able to get away for a few days during the summertime, but many of us do. I hope you return to the Cathedral refreshed!

However, I must admit that my own time away this summer did not go so well. Some of you have heard, correctly, that I became quite sick during the month of July. I returned from General Convention in Louisville with some sort of sore throat and strained voice. Several of you recognized that during the blessing of the Peachtree Road Race. As fun as that event was, it left me feeling a bit drained this year, and my voice got worse. Having tested negative for covid, I traveled to Ontario, Canada, and was ready to be with family. But my throat and voice became much worse. In the space of three weeks, I had to visit rural emergency rooms twice. About two weeks ago, I finally had a severely infected and swollen throat abscess drained. My recovery has not been quick, and my voice is still recovering; but I am not contagious!

Well, so go the illnesses of our lives. None of us welcomes sickness, and we are rarely prepared for it. But illness comes upon us, and we deal with it as we can. I pray that each of us has had a supportive community, a good group of friends, during the illnesses of our lives.

Sometimes, God even speaks a special message to us during our weakness and vulnerability. Though I am obviously a priest, I have as hard a time hearing God as anyone does. Yet, I hope I heard God reminding me of the importance of sacred community during my illness. I was certainly aware of Cathedral staff praying for me. And I was definitely grateful for friends and family driving me long distances to two different hospitals! I was grateful for family tending me, night and day. Weakness reminded me, yet again, that we need each other.

Yes, I know that this summer brought illness to others in our community. Somehow, covid came back! Ugh! So far, I am thankful that none of the covid cases in our community was too severe. But it was still a hassle.

It is time for health! It is time for renewal! I am thankful that the Cathedral of St. Philip, besides being a beautiful community, is itself a ministry of health and renewal. We welcome the sick, and we welcome those who need healing. And, at some point or another, each of us is one of those who need healing.

Our parish, the Cathedral of St. Philip has a history of being a restorative community. The world needs places that stand for long-term health and restoration. We have gone through various illnesses in our wider community, too. But we have come through, with the strength and energy of truly good faith.

The way we come through illness (and come back from illness!) with good faith is our tradition. Thank you for good faith! Thank you for good health! Thank you for holy community! See you this Sunday, August 11, 2024!



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