
The Super Bowl and the City: Citizenship and Community

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Dean Sam Candler**

Whether we liked it or not, the citizens of Atlanta paid more and more attention to the Super Bowl during the days and weeks leading up to February 3, 2019. The event was incessantly mentioned on television news stations, on the radio stations, in the local newspapers. The weather reports paid attention to it. The traffic reports paid attention to it. Businesses and restaurants and hotels prepared for it. Law enforcement personnel and politicians, pastors and youth groups, homeless shelters and food pantries, most all of us—no matter who we were—adjusted our attention spans and work schedules and stress levels in some manner or another.

As we all know by now, the Super Bowl is much larger than the game itself, and even larger than the attendance figures that night. The Atlanta boosters were right. For the city of Atlanta, the Super Bowl event was an invitation for the city itself to be hospitable, to show off, to be proud, and to work efficiently, no matter what our various political leanings or opinions or talents might be.

Yes, at the Super Bowl, the actual football contest, and even the outcome, was rather secondary (especially this year!). The main thing, for Atlantans, was how to play host, honorably, to so much national and media attention.

And, from my vantage point, I think we did it. I knew my life would not really be affected by who won the game, or by who sang what, or by the commercials. During the week before the Super Bowl, I was simply praying for safety and hospitality. I wanted Atlanta herself to be well and to do well.

I know there were issues. Some members of homeless communities were threatened and dislocated. Old and formidable complaints about tax revenues and construction mismanagement re-emerged. Some of the more embarrassing undersides of the city were exposed.

But, the national attention also exposed people who live and work honorably and conscientiously in Atlanta. It was amazing to see how much work and energy and time went into the service of hospitality and efficiency. It takes a city. It takes a city to show safety and hospitality; and I congratulate the citizens of Atlanta for citizenship well lived during that event.

The larger the Cathedral of St. Philip grows, the more we, too, become a village – not just a small prayer group or even a small church. We are many parishioners, and interests, and talents, and gifts, and callings. We have many opinions! And many theologies, too, and many different political leanings and passions.

I suppose the Cathedral's "Super Bowl" is Christmas and Easter, when our regular members do their regular thing for an extraordinary number of people. And, like the National Football League, our big games are on Sundays. Do people think professional football players work only on Sundays, or at the Super Bowl? No!

In the same way, people are mistaken if they think the Church only works on Sundays. Like the professional football teams, our real work takes place during the week, in practice and preparation and exercise and diligence. It is on Sundays that our work is exposed, but we work just as hard all the other days of the week, too.

It takes the energy of citizenship to host a Super Bowl. And it takes the energy of community to host prayer and service at the Cathedral. I give thanks for that citizenship in Atlanta, and I give thanks for that community at the Cathedral of St. Philip!

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 Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip

© The Cathedral of St. Philip. All rights reserved.