

St. Mary's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Growing into Jesus - Reaching out with Love

***Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?
No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.***

Romans 8:35-37

The Feast of Pentecost
May 31, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Who would have thought, back at Christmas, that we would be spending now months in the New Year with our churches closed down, watching our worship services on a program called Zoom? Amazing. So much for New Year predictions!

If you are like me, I would like very much for things to get back to normal; normal being defined as “the way things were before.” I’d love that very much. Yet, it seems like it is going to take a while before we can get back there.

Bishop Eaton, on May 6th, sent a document entitled ***On Being Faithful*** to the entire diocese to help congregations to develop a plan for re-entry, tailored to our needs, guided by what is feasible, practical and acceptable in their area. You can find that document on our website. In it he indicated that there are some things that we will be able to do fairly soon. In other cases it is going to take more preparation to make sure that when people come back onto the campus that it will be safe for them.

The Bishop’s document asks that we think about re-entry in seasons. In Season I we come to terms with the reality of the threat among us. The goal is to slow the spread of the virus by cancelling meetings, implementing hygiene practices, social distancing and wearing masks. Season II begins when the spread of the virus abates. “Stay at home-work safe” disciplines are gradually relaxed, while still prohibiting large gatherings. Season III is the lifting of restrictions, returning to regular life and work. Season IV begins the continuing work of preparing for future threats and pandemics.

As an initial step I have asked Maureen Cotter, the Rector’s Warden, to chair a Re-entry Committee to help put plans together for what such a process could look like for us. The membership of the committee is included at the end of this letter*, and has already begun meeting. Martin County is not Miami, and so our process will have its own timeline and benchmarks, though needing approval from the bishop at each stage. Fr. Christian and I are also in conversation with the other Martin County and diocesan clergy about their scheduled re-entry plans as well.

In the diocese we find ourselves at the very end of Season I, just beginning to see the light of Season II. We are working hard on what life might look like as we re-enter. It will be different than anything we have experienced before. Here at St. Mary’s an important first step will be for the staff to transition back in place at the office. Currently the staff are largely working from their homes and meeting by Zoom. In the month of

June the staff will begin working together again in the office. By the end of June visitors will be welcome to come to the office by appointment only.

Further, we are very aware that St. Mary's is filled with over 50 ministries that make up much of the vibrant energy that we have come to love. We will be working with the leadership of each of our ministries such as our Music Ministry, St. Mary's Thrift Shop and Mary's Kitchen, to develop their own timelines that are going to be appropriate for them. Each are unique, and each demand careful planning for the safety of their volunteers and guests.

Finally, when I think of church most often I think of corporate worship where we can gather closely in chairs or pews, and sing out with energy, whether in tune or not. Like you, I look forward to that. Unfortunately, it will take a bit longer for us to get there. Know that I and the staff and great lay leaders are working to allow corporate worship again just as soon as we safely can. I will let you know just as soon as I can. Until then, Fr. Christian and I look forward to waving to you on camera each weekend, knowing that your prayers and support are with us.

Your continued support and encouragement are critical to us. Your prayers are essential. We could not carry on the mission of Christ here if it weren't for you. Please be sure that you are getting our e-mails, and join us online for all of the great digital events that St. Mary's has to offer. From John Norris and his soup ministry, to the women who have provided masks for our safety, to Darcy Weir and her Easter meditations, the resurrected Christ has shown his power to carry on his work, regardless of the specter of the virus around us. Thank you for your part in making St. Mary's the amazing community that it is.

Peace,



The Rev. Dr. Todd Cederberg

*Re-Opening Committee (re-entry@stmarys-stuart.org)

Maureen Cotter, Rector's Warden (Chair)
Jane Gilson, People's Warden
Eula Clarke, Vice-Mayor, Stuart
Peter Dayton, Physician
Rob Morris, Local Business Owner
John Kelly, Facilities Manager
Karlette Peck, Retired Health Officer, Martin County
Ann Golibart, Parish Administrator
Fr. Christian Anderson, Associate Rector
Fr. Todd Cederberg, Rector