

July 31, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I pray that you are all safe and well as we continue to endure the ups and downs of the ongoing pandemic in our nation and around the world. For the past four months, our campus has been closed, yet we have continued to worship together online and gather virtually for fellowship and formation. It was our fervent hope that we would be able to resume “in person” worship at the beginning of August. However, given the steady increase in COVID-19 infections and deaths in recent weeks, we do not feel it is safe to reopen our buildings at this time. The other Episcopal congregations in north Palm Beach County are also remaining closed for “in-person” worship and gatherings.

But there is good news! Despite the uncertainty surrounding our reopening timeline, we are moving forward with our planning for the start of our new program year. We know that the next several months will continue to present challenges, but we are committed to staying connected and supporting one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. In the section that follows, I have attempted to answer a few of the most frequently asked questions regarding our future planning.

When will public worship resume?

At this time, no specific date has been determined for the return to “in person” public worship. The clergy of the North Palm Beach Deanery are meeting every week via Zoom. We have agreed to assess the situation every two weeks to determine when it is safe to reopen our buildings for worship and ministry.

When will the new Live-Streaming system be completed?

Our new Live Streaming system is currently being designed and prepared for installation. The initial installation of new electrical conduit and internet access has been completed. During the month of August, we will be training volunteers to operate the new system, and we are hoping to begin live streaming our worship services in September.

When will Good Shepherd School reopen?

After much discussion with the other Episcopal schools in our diocese and in consultation with our accrediting agency (FCIS), Good Shepherd School is planning to open in August. Fortunately, our small size works to our advantage. We have been able to make the necessary adjustments to our classrooms that will make it possible for us to follow all the current CDC recommendations for schools. Our students will not be gathering in large groups for chapel or other communal events. Dr. Rosemary Marshall and her staff have worked tirelessly all summer to ensure that our students will be returning to a safe environment.

What about our fall ministries and events?

At this point, all of our fall ministries and events are being planned to be held “virtually.” This will include the Rector’s Bible Study, Sunday School, Coffee Hour, and Youth Group. We will also be creating virtual versions of our *Back to School Event* in August, *Taste of Good Shepherd*, and our *Fall Giving Campaign*. A full schedule of events and ministries will be published soon.

Pennies For Heaven Thrift Shop will follow the Diocesan directive and remain closed for in-store shopping with the understanding that reopening is a fluid process. We, along with the other North Palm Beach Deanery churches, will be assessing our options based on the most current data available **every two weeks**. The shop continues to accept donations by appointment and has moved to online platforms like Ebay and OfferUp.

Over the course of the next few weeks, we will be providing regular updates concerning any changes to our reopening schedule. Please continue to pray for our staff and vestry as we make decisions and plan for the future. You are all in my daily prayers. I miss you and pray that we will be able to be together again very soon. Until then, be safe and keep the faith!

In Christ,
Doug+