

ST LUKE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

PO BOX 244, 11519 WILSON MILLS ROAD, CHARDON, OHIO. 44024

June 2, 2020

Dear friends and family of St Luke Episcopal Church,

I write to inform you that the vestry has made a decision regarding the commencement of public worship in our parish church. Following the recent communication from our bishop and the suggested preparations offered in the extensive diocesan document, the vestry of St Luke met by means of Zoom technology in order to discuss the timing for our initial gathering. We also discussed preparations needed in order to open our facility for public worship. We further discussed communications with the various groups which meet four of five evenings per week in our church basement.

I am happy to announce that we have identified Sunday June 21st, the Second Sunday after Trinity, to be our first Sunday gathering at the parish church.

- We will enter the church only through the front entrance. Inside the church foyer, you will find a hand cleaning station for your use.
- A shelf containing your own personal bible and prayer book will be available. You will not require a hymn book.
- Offering plates will be left at the entrance to the Nave for those who will be practicing stewardship.
- Masks and social distancing are an essential component of our plan to re-open. All attenders will be asked to come prepared with a mask for personal use in the building, and to respect social distancing guidelines.
- Designated seating will be identified and assigned to parishioners. Visitor designated seating will also be available. Couples and families will be able to sit in closer proximity to each other.
- Separate households will always be asked to maintain six feet of distance while in the building.
- We will for the time being, omit singing during worship as there is evidence that singing introduces air born Covid19 at a higher rate and for longer than simply speaking.
- We will be encouraging only socially distanced interaction following worship only exterior to the building.
- The doors to the church nave will be locked through the week to avoid contamination of the worship space in the mid-week. The reasoning here is that for hard surface contact of Covid-19, seven days should be sufficient to eliminate the possibility of encountering any residual virus.
- During worship times and following, we will avoid for the time being the use of the basement except for the washrooms.
- Access to the office will be restricted for now, to ensure the safety of our secretary. We are encouraging the congregation to reach out to the secretary with important information via e-mail, or by way of telephone. You may also if necessary, speak to the secretary through the glass partition in the office. Ultimately it will be the secretary who gives permission to relax this rule.
- We are in communication with the evening groups which assemble in our building and have made them aware of our expectations for their continued use of the building for their purposes.

Those expectations are spelled out in a letter which I have asked a representative of each group to sign and return to me before they resume their meetings.

- The worship space will be cleaned once per week between Sundays.

Each of the measures we take in opening our building is designed to ensure the safety of all who attend the parish for worship. On line worship will continue for the foreseeable future, and in all likelihood, permanently. If you are symptomatic you should avoid attending church and consult your health care provider for advice. If you are in a vulnerable demographic and wish to remain secluded, the on line worship will be available to you. If you wish to receive a pastoral visit, by all means contact the Rector. Each step that we take in this ongoing process is based on the best available information from our own health department, state health authorities, the Governor's office and the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control. We are using these authorities in order to offer the assurance that we are doing all in our power to protect one another from exposure or infection by Covid-19. Our goal is to provide assurance to members and visitors alike, that we may have a high level of confidence that we are gathering safely.

Our worship will likely be based on the service Office of Morning Prayer, as found in the Book of Common Prayer. The Lord's Supper will not be celebrated publically at this time, nor until we can find a way to distribute the element of bread in a safe manner. We will not be producing bulletins for distribution but one will be available weekly and on line if you wish to print it at home and bring along to the church. In that case please remember to take it with you when you depart. The hymn books will be removed from the Nave until we are again able to sing in our gatherings. Each attending person will be able to access a Book of Common Prayer to follow the service, and a bible to follow the scripture lessons as they are read in the church. I expect to send along an email before June 21 which will offer greater specificity with regard to worship and other decisions taken by vestry. In the meanwhile, if you have an observation or would like to ask for clarification or make a suggestion for consideration, please contact the office to leave a message for the rector, or email the Rector or Wardens.

This regathering will of course feel very different and not much like the way things used to be. As we make decisions this fact is pressing upon all of us. What we know for sure is that the church is not exempt from the effects of Covid-19, but rather experiences apace with our society every responsibility which this crisis has introduced. This may seem challenging, as we re-set our expectations to conform to a new reality. What I have discovered over the past ten or more weeks is that to be the church takes a lot of intentional and deliberate effort. Perhaps we are discovering that this was the case all along and that the virus and other events that seem to convulse our world are having the effect of helping us determine what is important and worth making effort to secure. As I write this I am mindful of the words of the Presiding Bishop who had this to say in his Word To The Church,...

None of us can go back. We must move forward. But we don't know for sure what the new normal will be. Fortunately, God's rubric of love shows us the way.ⁱ

When the Bishop refers to this 'rubric (rule) of love,' he is speaking of a verity, ...a truth,...for the generative force of God is love. Love sustains and upholds the world and seeks to overthrow all that would diminish the image of God in God's creation. We have been invited in this time of pandemic, this *plague year*, to remember that God's creation has been here before,...the world has always been on the edge of some such threat. In times like this we are called upon to make a choice: we may succumb to the

evil which seeks our destruction or we may give ourselves over to the reshaping of our individual lives and our common life in a pattern whose Creator is The Lord God Almighty.

This Crisis asks a great deal of of...it asks for character shaped by forces that are always on the side of the angels. St Paul encourages us with these words,

*“Let each of us look not to our own interests but to the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”*ⁱⁱ

Let us then put on the mind of Christ as we move into all that God has in store for us.

Faithfully

Rev. Chris McCann

ⁱ Michael Curry, [A Word To The Church](#). Easter, 2020

ⁱⁱ Philippians 2.4-5