

## Re-Opening at St. John's

Greetings, St. John's

I pray that this letter finds you well, and I thank you for the graciousness you have shown me during this time. The Lord has been at work amongst you, which is evident in the way that you have loved your new rector in this challenging time when it would be easier to find fault.

At least one segment of this strange time is coming to a close. After being apart for too long, we are about to begin meeting again in person with outdoor services at 9 AM. It has taken a lot of work to pull this all together. The Vestry have been instrumental in planning and preparing for our outdoor services, and I wish to thank them for their service. They have come for work days, located supplies, and spent a lot of time thinking and talking to find an effective way for us to meet together safely. There are several other people that have been essential in this process:

Fr. Don and Ruth, who have been helping me on Sunday mornings with altar set-up and the services themselves;

Doug Bennett, who has been working on live stream capabilities, so that we can participate in worship together, even if we cannot meet together;

Dcn. Curtis, who repaired and repainted the stage and picnic tables in the back to be a beautiful place for us to worship;

Jerry Bennett, who has built for us a wonderful altar rail and will be working on a table for us, so that we can worship in a familiar way, even if we are in a different place.

### **Why are we doing this?**

Why not just return to the way we have always done things? This is part of the challenge of this season. Our country has been facing a virus for which we have neither built-up immunity nor a vaccine, and the population it primarily attacks makes up a significant part of our church (though even if it would only target one member of the church, it would still be cause for concern). Because we are a Body, we need to work together to protect those most vulnerable (our own bodies do this; when a foot is under attack with an infected cut, the rest of the body works together to bring healing; it does not say to the foot, sorry, you are on your own). Our governments here in Texas and in Boerne have put out requirements and restrictions for meeting together. To satisfy those requirements for meeting indoors would take us a lot longer to pull together. Being outside allows us to meet together sooner and to do so with greater safety. This is only a temporary measure. We will be continuing to set up the needed infrastructure to have services inside, but until then, outside services are the most effective way for us to gather together.

## What to Expect?

Although there are changes to the setting and the way we interact, the service itself is remaining essentially the same. Once we begin the service, I hope it feels much like it normally does. Below is a list of the key changes to help keep everyone as safe as we can.

1. Time
  - a. We will be having the service **at 9 AM**. I know this is different than normal, but it will help us stay in the shade and finish before it gets too hot.
2. Parking
  - a. Since we are now meeting behind the CE Building, the places at the bottom of the parking lot are reserved for those who are handicapped or need assistance walking.
  - b. Younger individuals and families, I would request you park further up in the parking lot, possibly even in the back parking lot.
  - c. If you need help getting to the stage or need help carrying your chairs, we will have ushers and people there to assist you. There are rocks and the ground is not always even, so please be careful.
  - d. If you may need help walking and had to park farther away, you may find it easier to walk through the CE Building and come out the back door. If you do, please wait for an usher or someone to assist you down the stairs. They are deceptively steep.
3. Seating
  - a. We have 6 picnic tables set out around the stage. Please try to reserve the picnic tables for larger families.
  - b. Bring your own lawn or camping chairs. If you forget, do not worry, we will have some chairs available.
  - c. Family groups need to be spaced out 6 feet apart from each other.
  - d. The area remains shaded during the service, especially on the left-hand side.
4. The Service
  - a. The services will be said, not sung, during this time.
  - b. Please use the online form to submit prayer requests. Last minute requests will be accepted, but using the online form will be the most effective way to make a request.
    - i. The Website is here: <https://forms.gle/aDbayRHuQ26RpPL17>
  - c. We will be using paper service booklets during this time. If possible, keep it with you to be reused each week. It will save on how much we need to reprint.
5. Communion
  - a. Please remain seated until an usher indicates your turn.

- b. There are four cushions at the rail, no more than one family group per cushion (larger families may require two cushions). Try to maintain distance as best as you can.
  - c. Enter from the right-hand side, leave by the left-hand side. There are ramps on each side.
  - d. Someone will sanitize the rail between each set of people.
  - e. I will first hold up the bread, and then I will intinct it for you. If you wish not to partake in the cup (Christ's presence is fully in each element, the bread and the wine, so you are not missing anything by not receiving the cup), then cross your arms in an X on your chest. I will then give you just the bread.
  - f. You may receive on your tongue, or you may take the bread from me.
  - g. For those who will still be staying at home, we will be continuing the Act of Reception for Spiritual Communion. I recommend that you print the Spiritual Communion liturgy out if you are able, so that you may follow along.
6. Fellowship
- a. We will have a little time for fellowship after the service. We will have water and pre-packaged snacks.
  - b. Since we already have the chairs and picnic tables set up, we will use that space for our fellowship time as well.
7. Personal Protective Equipment
- a. Masks are recommended but not required. There will be no mocking or denigrating of anyone whether they choose to wear a mask or choose not.
  - b. We will have hand sanitizer stationed around the area.
  - c. **Water bottles will be available. Please stay hydrated.**

I know that this will be different, but I ask that you bear with us for a little while longer. We will still be working towards getting inside, but I do think this will be a wonderful time to make use of all the space that God has given us here at St. John's.

Grace and Peace be with you all,

Fr. Kyle+