

LETTER FROM PASTOR AND COUNCIL ON REOPENING SERVICES PLAN

May 14, 2020

Dear Fellow Parishioner(s),

In the Epistle reading for the 5th Sunday of Easter, which was May 10, Peter writes: *"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."* (1 Pet. 2:8-9) As God's holy people and royal priests in Christ at St. Peter, I am writing to you to give you an update.

On Wednesday, May 6, and again on the 13th, the Council and I met online to discuss two things: first, how the congregation is doing financially; and, second, to consider the resumption of Sunday worship and the changes that will need to be made. The latter is especially because Gov. Lamont is planning to begin allowing many businesses in CT to reopen after May 20. So: what about church? When will our Sunday morning worship resume?

The Council and I have had lengthy discussions about this, and I also sent out an email to the congregation on May 7, asking for your input. Taking your responses into consideration, we have decided that the 10:00 AM Sunday Service will resume on May 24. Keep in mind the recommendation of the White House and the CDC in *Opening Up America Again* that vulnerable individuals should continue to shelter in place during the first phase of reopening. Vulnerable individuals are, a) the elderly; and, b) Individuals with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system is compromised, such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy. Obviously, if you do not feel well you should definitely stay at home.

Know that the church will be carefully cleaned and sanitized every Saturday (with door knobs and railings wiped down, etc.), and then also after the Service on Sunday. Also, Sunday School and Bible class will not resume until the fall. They normally end for the summer in early June anyway, so I felt it best to simply not begin them until the fall.

If you do come to worship, beginning on the 24th, you will quickly see that things at church are not the same as they always were. This begins outside. When you arrive for church, please leave a space between your car and the next car. Then, only two entrances into the church will be open: the outside doors that are up the driveway and before the porch steps, and the upper (handicap) parking lot entrance. The lower door by the kitchen will be locked, and entrance will not be permitted there. The doors at the open entrances will be propped open, so that you can enter without touching the door.

In the church, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Hymnals & Bibles, cards & pencils **have been removed from all pews.**
2. **Everyone is to wear masks** throughout the Service. I will not, due to my role in leading the Service (although I will wear one as people enter and leave, and when distributing Communion).
3. **Hand sanitizer will be available** at the back and side entrances of the sanctuary, and also in the bathrooms. Please use when entering the church and before leaving the bathroom.
4. **Worship liturgies for each person** will be available on tables in the back and at the front entrance. **Ushers will not handle them or hand them out**, but will direct people to pick them up as they enter. (They will be spaced out.)
5. **Families/couples are to sit at least 6' apart from others.** You will be asked to sit in alternate pews and at opposite ends of the pew.
6. No acolyte will be involved in the Service. An usher will light and extinguish the candles.
7. **The offering will not be collected** during the Service. Plates will be left on the tables with the liturgies for people to put their offerings in as they enter or leave.
8. **There will be no children's message, and no sharing of the peace with one another.**
9. Communion: any who do not wish to receive at the present time will still be able to make an appointment with me and receive Communion privately during the week. But, **the Sacrament will be offered at every Sunday Service**, as has been done for years. I will wash my hands and use hand sanitizer immediately before the distribution. I will then bring Communion to parishioners in their pews. This will enable social distancing to be more easily maintained. I will drop the wafer into people's hands, and the wine will be given in individual cups only, with the cups well-spaced. People will drop their cups into containers that are at the ends of the pews.
10. **After the closing hymn, social distancing is to be maintained if greeting one another.** Do not gather in groups.
11. **Liturgies, etc. will be disposed of on the way out** in garbage cans by the doors.

These procedures will be followed at the beginning, and gradually relaxed as community restrictions are eased. We have no timetable for this, but will keep you informed as time goes on.

We realize that these procedures can be uncomfortable, but they are important for preventing the spread of Covid-19 and are expected of businesses within the community. We ask that you follow them. If you have questions and/or concerns, please give me, or any of the Council members, a call or send us an email.

It will be a joy to be back in our Lord's house again! Keep that as your focus, and the great blessings that we receive as we receive our Savior in His Word and Sacrament. Also know that the Service will continue to be recorded – this time on Sunday morning – and then posted on YouTube for viewing by those who are unable to attend. The link for this is on our website: www.stpetersnorwalk.org. I will also continue to teach an online Bible study every Wednesday at 7:30 PM on Zoom. A number of people have been joining in this class... and there's always room for more! I send out the invitation every

week by email. If you do not receive my invitation, send me your email and I will include you in this, and other updates and announcements.

God bless you and keep you as, together with our friends and neighbors, we move toward the resumption of normal life. May He guide and bless those who are working to find better treatments, and ultimately a vaccine, to combat this virus!

In Christ Jesus our Lord,

Pastor Beinke & Council