

St. James' E-pistle: **SPECIAL EDITION**

A Letter from the Rector for May 15, 2020

Dear People of St. James',

First off, I want to share a word of deep gratitude for the supercharge of joy I received on my birthday from the caravan of parishioners who gave Cannondale Drive an explosion of excitement worthy of its name! It was most definitely a celebration to remember, and now I have my very own "St. James' Facemask" as a reminder of what I dearly hope and pray will be my **only** birthday under the shadow of pandemic isolation.

As I looked out from the rectory front porch at those carloads filling up our short Drive, it occurred to me that this was almost certainly the closest that a group of St. James' members had physically gathered (somewhat) together since our stay-at-home measures took over our lives many weeks ago. And now that we are hearing news and updates on a daily basis about steps towards "opening up" locally and across our nation, I'm sure you are wondering what it all means for St. James'.

On the re-opening front, I have a bit of news and information to share. Our bishops have been in frequent communication with our state's health leaders and government officials, and I have been joining in on a zoom meeting with our bishops and diocesan staff every Wednesday morning. This week, they have shared a resource of some depth about our current Covid-19 state of affairs as the Episcopal Church in Connecticut. **I strongly encourage all of you to carefully read the attachment prepared for us [here](#).** My hope is that we will all use this document as our basis of information going forward. In my continuing conversations with the leaders and members of St. James', I will assume that you have already read this document, so it will be a great help for our future communications for us all be on the same page. Read on!

The very brief news I have for you is that, though certain businesses will be permitted to begin opening up under specific safety parameters on May 20th, we should not expect St. James' to begin resuming in-person worship or work at that time. Depending on how the management of the virus continues in the coming days and weeks, we will gradually begin phasing in our church operations later.

That does not mean, however, that your leaders and I are at all ignoring or putting off our desires to return! Quite the opposite, in fact. The truth is, there will be *hundreds* of considerations and factors that we will have to work through and plan for before we begin to open the doors to the public. If you just imagine for a moment how many ways our usual Sunday morning practices violate the health precautions that we have been observing lately, you will realize just how many adjustments we will need to make, and the small army of volunteers who will be involved in ensuring that we do not harm to anyone who comes to us for sanctuary. So, as I seem to be saying frequently these days—“Stay tuned!” because every day of the coming weeks will bring potential steps forward and backward in our journey to together again.

But first! Please remember that we do already have many opportunities to see one another’s faces and hear one another’s voices every day, here at St. James’. We have a simple Zoom Morning Prayer with Music on Saturdays, and following the broadcast of Sunday Morning Prayer, we have Coffee Hour online from 10-11am. And this week, we will have a special opportunity to come together for a virtual Capital Campaign Reception that your Campaign leaders have been planning for weeks! This will be the chance for all of us to learn about the investments that St. James’ hopes to make in our future together, to hear testimonials from our fellow parishioners, and to ask our questions about plans for restoring and renewing our church’s grounds. Because we will be preparing materials to send out to everyone who attends, please do follow the instructions on the [Invitation Card](#) to RSVP.

We speak frequently in the Church about the way we live in an “Already/Not Yet” time in the history of creation. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, has come already, and will come again at the end of days. And we are now living faithfully in the meantime, guided by all that we have learned from what has come before, but never losing sight of what is yet to come. So it is, indeed, in the present days of St. James’! Our decisions today and in the immediate days to come are being shaped by what we know to be both faithful and courageous, and also by what we have learned to be sensible and responsible. But still, we are not backward looking people. We have not lost sight of generations yet to come, whose lives will be transformed and given meaning by the faith tradition and resources that we help pass on to them. So, in the days before us, may we plan fearlessly, decide hopefully, and proceed lovingly, for *all*.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Dustin+