

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

A Letter from the Rector for May 22, 2020

Dear People of St. James',

Since I wrote to you all last week, our state has entered into its first phase of re-opening our businesses and public spaces since the Covid-19 pandemic began. I shared with you then the communication prepared for churches in our diocese as well, interpreting the latest guidelines of scientists and public health authorities for our churches. (*For those who may have missed that important information, you may find it again available for download [here](#).*) Many are now wondering what this all will mean specifically for opening up at St. James' Church. The word I have to share with you today is that we will be proceeding with caution and care, taking into account many variables that are shifting on a daily basis around us. While we might prefer to have clear-cut dates to mark onto our calendars and look forward to, even if they need to be in the distant future, a public health crisis like the one we presently face just doesn't cooperate with our scheduling desires. At this early stage, we are still in a "wait and see mode" for this moment, today. But please do pay careful attention to the communications you are regularly receiving from our parish, as this dynamic situation means that plans may change and change again regularly over the coming weeks and months.

The one thing we want to avoid at all cost is moving ahead with re-opening before we are ready, or before we can ensure that our plan will not put anyone at risk of contracting the coronavirus at a church function. You may have read or heard news reports out this week of churches around the country that *did* open their doors and resume worship, only to have to close down again when positive virus tests emerged in the congregation. Tragically, we have heard that in one such Roman Catholic parish in Houston, one priest possibly died from Covid-19 complications and several others of the parish did test positive, shortly after the church resumed services. We do not want to make such headlines at St. James' Church. We will gather when we are able, as we are able, as soon as we can safely do so. In the meantime, in this brief season of "Ascensiontide," we will remember that we the Church have had to make due with less-than-ideal circumstances before, and have found, in fact, that we were still able to flourish when times of adversity required us to step out in faith into new and unforeseen directions.

As you have read in your E-pistle for today, several of those new directions are

opening now before us on our journey together. Our “Joining Jesus” Capital Campaign has now launched into its full glory, inviting all members and friends of the congregation to participate in new possibilities for our church and its grounds. I will be offering a single-session workshop exploring The Daily Office this Tuesday evening, covering how each of us can tap into the richness of that worship practice that sometimes unfortunately seems relegated to the liturgical “understudy” role, compared to the glory of our Sunday celebrations of the Holy Eucharist. And for next Sunday, The Feast Day of Pentecost, I will be trying to gather as many languages as possible for our Readings of our Morning Prayer service. So, if you are a speaker of a language other than English, I encourage you to reach out and let me know *by this Sunday*, so I can include your voice in our community’s celebration of the wonder of Pentecost.

Until that day, I pray that we all will be well, and stay well, and perhaps take a moment to cast the eyes of our spirits downwards and see if we may, in this present season of challenges, find new growth beginning to break forth from the soil of St. James’, right at our very feet.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Dustin+