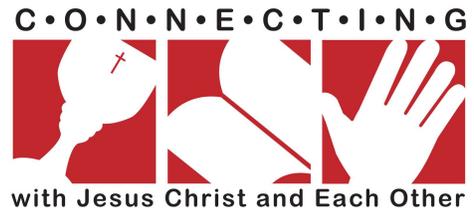


## Rev. Andrew Thompson

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May 1, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus,

Much has changed since my last letter, and much is still the same. The leadership of St. Stephanus asked me to update you on our current situation and our plans going forward.

- Worship will continue to be held over YouTube Live for the foreseeable future. Many, many thanks to those who have contributed to making that happen, and for you who are connecting with each other within those worship services (and outside of them as well). As I was teaching on the First Article yesterday in Confirmation, the words of Luther that it is our duty to “thank and praise” God for all that we have received are certainly as true today as they were two months ago. Psalm 150:6 says, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” and we will continue to do so in the days and weeks ahead.
- The Sacrament of the Altar has been the subject of intense discussion revolving around appropriate institution and what the needs of the community are to receive this gift. We have gone round and round with questions of logistics. At this point, we have decided to continue not celebrating the Lord’s Supper as a congregational activity until we return to the Sanctuary. This, frankly, breaks my heart a little and after reading Luke 24 last week the desire on my part to celebrate it was incredibly high. We’re looking at how to celebrate it well when we reopen the Sanctuary to public worship. We also recognize that the comfort and gift of Jesus can and should be available as an extension of pastoral care, and welcome anyone to reach out to me at [pastor@saintstephanus.org](mailto:pastor@saintstephanus.org) to discuss how that care can be extended to you.
- We are planning. One of the most helpful guides for us is using the book of Nehemiah to begin to direct our thoughts. Briefly,
  - He got permission from the king and received right of passage and provisions for the work (Neh. 2:4–9).
  - He made a personal evaluation of the situation (context) with a small group of advisors (Neh. 2:11–18).
  - He divided up the work among several team leaders (Neh. 3).
  - He encouraged the many joining in the effort to stand strong against opposition (Neh. 4 and 6).
  - He directed ministry to meet the needs of those in the community who were suffering want (Neh. 5).
  - He kept track of people and accounted for them because people are really important to God (Neh. 7).
  - He arranged for God’s Word to be proclaimed that led to repentance and renewal and a celebration that is described in this way: “*The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away*” (Neh. 8–12; see esp. 12:43).
  - He instituted some lasting reforms ... some things would not go back the way they were (Neh. 13).
- There is much more to this, but it is a start in our direction. Peace be with you all.

In Jesus,

Pastor Thompson