

God's grace and peace to you today.

I wanted to take a moment to reach out to you pastorally to give you a VERY informal look at how I see the weeks and months ahead.

First and FOREMOST, I miss each of you! And, though I know choosing an alternate way to do our congregational meeting was the best decision in light of the logistics and planning it would have taken, it is my hope that we will be able to gather in person as a worship community soon. I know it will be a while (even when in person worship resumes) before I can shake or hold your hands in prayer. But please know that I've been holding each of you in my heart and will continue to do so.

I believe it important for you to hear what I see and hope for as we move through this month and into the next.

Please know that ALL of what I'm about to share with you is NOT at this time part of any finalized plan. It is NOT set in stone and may (likely will) be altered or adapted as leaders converse and work towards finalization. Once that happens expect to receive more formal communication from me and our council leadership.

Again, my intention here is to simply give you a picture of the possibilities I see based on ongoing conversations among leaders. I hope this sparks your hope, invites your feedback and brings a smile to your face.

As I outline these possibilities I would also ask that you be sensitive to the fact that they not only involve your worship space but also my work environment.

So starting there, as we think about what it will be like to resume in person worship, it would be my hope that (at least initially) when we begin to gather (no matter how we feel about the issue) we covenant with one another to wear masks in the worship space. We must acknowledge and be sensitive to the fact that we are not all in the same place as far as our level of comfort. I believe masks give persons (like myself), who are not quite where others are as far as their level of comfort, some sense of safety, security, and peace. I got my hair cut for the first time this past week and felt incredibly nervous. But the precautions they took helped bring me a sense of peace about going. It is my hope that as we share Jesus, love, and serve, our service would include that level of compassionate hospitality. So yes masks, and to be clear, NO ONE should feel pressured to come back to our worship space until they feel comfortable.

As singing in worship will likely not be possible for some time (due to aerosol spread) when we are able to gather for worship, the service(s) will likely be spoken and include instrumental music. For this reason, it is very much my hope that we will ALSO continue to make available what we are currently doing via YouTube. Through that medium

Deacon Kathleen has been able to insert audio clips of our choirs and congregational singing from the past so as to ensure our music ministry continues to be the blessing we know it to be for St. Paul and our community.

When we do move back to onsite live streaming we would likely take a video of the sermon so that it might be inserted into the YouTube file. For that reason, I would expect that our YouTube version of worship would not be available until 7 PM on Sundays. So, I could see us (again no guarantees) being ready by the 28th of this month to have a small team back onsite live streaming AND still have the YouTube style worship. We would likely do this for one or two Sundays as we got ready for larger gathering(s).

The property team has cut PVC pipes in 6-foot lengths to be placed along with hand sanitizer in every other pew. This will make it quite easy to social distance when you come in to take your seat. Adding chairs and using every other pew maintains 6 feet between occupied pews. We believe that we could get 70 to 100 persons socially distanced in the sanctuary in this way. Members of the property team invited some persons to come in and try it out. They then took some pictures to illustrate what that might look like for us. Those pictures are attached. I hope that you will find them both helpful and humorous.

I'm not sure whether we would have communion at first or not but when we do it would likely be at the end of worship and as you are dismissed by pew that you would receive the sacrament at one of the designated exits.

Attached you will find pictures of one of ten new communion trays that Bernie Berninger has graciously made for us. These trays would be placed at stations / on portable tables (as seen in the attached pictures). You will note that each tray contains 10 glasses that are a safe distance from one another. The instructions on the screens would be something like this:

- *Following the Lord's Prayer worshippers will be invited by rows to exit at either the door by the band area or the main exit doors to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion and / or a blessing. Please maintain social distance, keep your mask on and continue moving as you receive the sacrament, waiting to consume the bread and wine once you have reached the last station. There you will find a receptacle for you to place your empty glass prior to walking to your car. Our dismissal will be visible on the sign in the parking lot as you exit: "You are now entering your mission field."*

Realizing that not all will be comfortable coming back inside the sanctuary and again not wanting anyone to feel pressured to do so, I believe that in addition to the trays and tables being used at the church we could use them to take the sacrament out to you in

the community. So, attached you will find a document that breaks our active worship community out into ten geographical zones. My vision for the ten identified zones would be that each would have a “zone manager” who would work with a eucharistic minister. After an onsite worship service, that eucharistic minister would fold up one of the tables and take it along with the elements as well as one of the trays out into the community.

The “zone manager” would have identified a central location within their zone conducive to inviting people to gather in socially distanced circles of ten. They would have communicated that to persons living within their zone and had them sign up so as to have a better idea of how many circles of ten they would need to organize. Once the eucharistic minister got onsite, he or she would take the portable table, newly designed tray & consecrated elements to the center of the circle. Then (with gloves on) they would fill the glasses, place the host on or near each glass and step back into the circle. One by one each person would step into the center, take their bread & wine, and move back into place until all had done the same. An initial trial run with ONE location would help the zone managers determine if they needed to identify a different location or additional locations. One size would obviously not fit all but the best arrangement could be worked out zone to zone.

As you open the document that breaks the membership out into these zones you can choose the search option to find your name and in which zone you have been placed. If that zone does not make sense to you, please let me know by responding to this email which of the other zones is a better fit and I will make that change.

Please remember that NONE of this is official. These are ONLY my thoughts and NOT set in stone. My intention is simply to get some of what is in my head and what leaders are conversing about out to you so as to give you an ability to see the proverbial “light at the end of the pandemic tunnel”.

Finally, please know and spread the word that I have had several folks come to me anonymously saying that if we have any St. Paul family in financial need because of the pandemic and its economic impact they would like to donate their stimulus monies to the pastor’s discretionary (i.e. member-community assistance) fund to help out. If you are in need please contact me. The conversation is confidential and because your brothers and sisters in Christ love you, they count on me to have it on their behalf. Thank you each for your prayerful attention to this pastoral email.

Standing With You In The Grip of God’s Grace,

Pastor Jeff