



April 30, 2020

Dear St. Helena's Parish Family,

Grace to you and Peace in the midst of this joyful Easter season, and in the midst of these unusual days of coronavirus restrictions. First and foremost I want to thank you for your faithfulness during these days. Thank you to so many of you who have expressed support, ministered to fellow parishioners, prayed, and made financial contributions to support God's work at St. Helena's. The St. Helena's Parish Family is a strong and faithful one, and your actions continue to inspire me.

I find this verse from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans to be helpful to me during these days: *Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.* (Romans 12:12) I write to you today to give you an update regarding plans for the phased reopening of St. Helena's campus to in-person worship and ministries.

The subject of reopening businesses, restaurants, and public parks is in the headlines of the media. The Governor of Texas and Mayor of Boerne have issued guidelines and plans for reopening the state, local businesses, and public life. These plans are being updated almost every day. In the first phase of the Governor's plans, churches may reconvene public worship. Some of you have asked if St. Helena's will conduct in-person worship this Sunday, or if you can hold meetings on the campus.

The decision to return to St. Helena's campus for in-person worship, meetings, studies, fellowship, and ministries will be guided by three primary considerations:

- The health and safety of our parishioners, school families, staff and surrounding community.
- The pastoral direction of our bishop.
- The guidance of state and local health officials.

On Friday, April 24, Bishop Reed announced his decision to extend the moratorium on in-person worship and meetings in all congregations of the diocese through May 15. St. Helena's will abide by the directions of our bishop and await his further guidance in the weeks ahead. Therefore, we will not reconvene any in-person activities on our campus before that date.

In addition to the three primary considerations listed above, there are many practical considerations which the staff and I have been discussing. Just some of these include: the lack of availability of hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies; how to arrange seating in worship spaces to create social distancing; what new procedures to adopt in the nursery; what changes to

worship patterns like distribution of holy communion, passing the peace, and offertory collection need to be introduced; how to sanitize spaces between meetings or classes; how to determine the seating capacity of the historic sanctuary and Great Room; etc. Decisions regarding all of these details are decisions about keeping people safe, and many of them need to be researched and understood before people return to our facilities.

St. Helena's beautiful campus will not reopen all at once. The staff and I will work with ministry leaders to open our campus to in-person gatherings in phases, starting with small gatherings and increasing over time. It is too soon to set a timeline for this because many factors are still unknown and we are awaiting the pastoral directions of Bishop Reed. I will announce plans as soon as they are available.

I can announce to you that some decisions have been made regarding some of our large ministries and events. The staff and I have made the decision not to hold Vacation Bible School in June. We are considering options to reschedule it for later in the summer. The Decades Dinner has been postponed and will be rescheduled for late summer or early fall. Confirmation classes and New Member classes have been canceled for May and will be rescheduled for the fall. The Pilgrimage to the Holy Land has been rescheduled from July to December, 2020. As other adjustments to the church calendar are made the parish staff and I will keep you informed in as timely a manner as possible. If you have questions please contact me or a staff member and we will do our best to assist you.

I know that many of you are as eager as I am to return to the beautiful, peaceful, and holy setting of St. Helena's Church campus. I know you are as eager as I am to greet and worship the Risen Lord with your extended faith family. I ask you to be patient a little longer. Join me in *rejoicing in hope, being patient in tribulation, and being constant in prayer*. Do so knowing that you remain in my daily prayers. If I can assist you in any way, or answer any questions, please feel free to call or e-mail me.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David" with a stylized flourish at the end.

David+