



# UPDATE

## *Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Re-Gathering*



*Dear Siblings in Christ of Holy Shepherd,*

We are excited to share updates with you as we move into the next season of being Church together. Even during this time of pandemic, we are committed to faithfully living out our mission:

***“Worshiping and Growing Together in Christ,  
Serving and Reaching Out Joyfully to All.”***

While this is a season of excitement as we seek new ways to learn together and serve outside our own walls, we also recognize and feel the grief that comes from physical separation and pandemic restrictions. We continue to ask for the grace to make space within ourselves and our community for both of these realities as we move into the Fall.

In conversation with the Bishop’s office, Church Council, Holy Shepherd staff, and the Re-gathering team, we affirm the following recommendations put forward by Synod Council and the Office of the Bishop:

1. Continue to use an online/digital platform for in-door, corporate worship through at least the end of the calendar year. **During this time, the Re-Gathering Team, Holy Shepherd staff, council and pastors will be monitoring data and recommendations from reputable sources and will consider re-gathering at an earlier date should safety guidelines allow us to do so.”**
2. Continue to offer low-risk, in person gatherings following the guidelines put forward by the Holy Shepherd Re-gathering team.
3. Pay special attention to those most impacted by the pandemic and the most vulnerable in our society. The Office of the Bishop invites us, during this season, to pay special attention to the sin of racism and its effect on our community.
4. Explore what it means to be a “church becoming.” How do we continue to live out our mission and vision in light of pandemic realities and changes to our culture and society?

The above points are a summary of the Bishop’s recommendations.

To read his letter in full, please use this link:

<http://bishopgonia.blogspot.com/2020/08/continuing-our-life-as-church-becoming.html>

So, in light of these recommendations, how will we live faithfully in this time as God’s Church?

Here is our plan: Holy Shepherd will continue

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- The pastors, staff, and ministry leaders will continue to offer **video devotionals, Bible studies and classes, worship, prayer opportunities and communion services**. Staff, the Re-gathering team, and worship teams are also exploring new ways of fostering connection around worship and communion despite physical distancing.
- Beginning in September, we will be utilizing a **new worship resource called the Narrative Lectionary**. The Narrative Lectionary focuses on the Grand-Narrative in Scripture and how God has been and continues to be active in our world.
- We will also be joining our siblings in Christ at Lutheran Church of the Master, for **“God’s Work, Our Hands” day in September**. We will have a combined digital worship with Lutheran Church of the Master and be invited, together, to serve our neighbors through participating in a blood drive on September 16<sup>th</sup>.
- We have hired Kevin Klinkerfues as **Holy Shepherd’s new Property Manager** This is an exciting time to continue our faithful stewardship of the property of Holy Shepherd as we ensure that the building is ready when it is safe for us to return, and also the desire to use the building for the sake of the broader community during this time of pandemic.
- We have, also, hired Jordan Ortman as our **Organist/Accompanist**. The Worship & Music Team has responded to our need to fill this position and has welcomed a talented and gifted musician to be a part of the worship ministry.
- We continue to seek ways to **connect with one another**. There are some small-group, in-person gatherings like the Men’s Breakfast group and there are also opportunities to connect via the phone or computer like the new Calling Ministry team.
- We seek to **serve and partner with community groups** beyond our own walls like Eiber Elementary, the Action Center, and Family Promise. As we partner with others in our community our own faith lives are deepened and enriched.
- In response to the Bishop’s recommendations that **we explore racism and racist structures within ourselves and our communities**, we will offer resources, Bible studies, and other opportunities to continue to learn about the sin of racism and how we can best combat it.
- In an effort to dig into the questions surrounding how we do and be church during this time of pandemic, the pastors will be holding **several forums with ministry leaders** early in the Fall to check in, connect, and dream about new ministry connections and possibilities.

If you can't tell, we are excited about being Church together, even in this time of pandemic. Friends, in this time of great uncertainty, we have a God that is clearly and faithfully calling us to be God's Church. It is clear that the world is hungry for the Good News of Jesus Christ. And it is clear that God has been, is, and will continue to be faithful in providing and guiding God's Church in all times and places, even right here and right now.

We know this information can be overwhelming. Please know that the pastors, council and leadership of Holy Shepherd are committed to keeping you informed as we move into the future. Leaders from Holy Shepherd will be contacting everyone to make sure we all have the same information.

***Holy Shepherd, Jesus has journeyed to the cross and the grave and has risen.  
Nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus. Let's let the world know.***

*God's Peace, Pastor Michael and Pastor Courtney*