

A cooperative ministry of

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Pastoral Reflections—July 2020

Dear Churches,

I'm excited to move into the parsonage and begin to meet all of you. I wanted to use this newsletter to talk about how I think we can move forward and begin to have worship services again. Following the guidelines from the state and those from our bishop as well, I would like us to begin services July 5th at all 3 churches of the charge, with some changes to try to be faithful to protect the health of our churches and our families and communities.

Masks will be strongly encouraged indoors, especially when entering and exiting the churches. Please try to maintain social distancing between family units, like leaving every other pew open. We will not pass offering plates but instead have them available for you to place your tithes and offerings. It was suggested to me that Centerville and Riceville would like to have communion, but individuals or families will bring their own bread instead of sharing one loaf of bread and we will have the individual communion cups. For the time being we won't be having bulletins printed. The bishop and others have also cautioned against congregational singing indoors so I would encourage us to listen to the hymns or songs being played and either hum along or meditate on the words as we listen. It might seem strange, but I believe even this is an opportunity to respect the guidance and care of our bishop and leaders, but also an opportunity to maybe experience God in a different way.

I know this has been and may continue to be a difficult and frustrating time, but I think it's important for us to remember that whatever difficulties or obstacles we face, God is with us. I believe God wants us to do what we can to keep ourselves and our neighbors safe. I understand that masks are an issue for some because of health reasons or otherwise, and while we can't force people to wear one, I would encourage it, but also understand if you do not wear one. If you feel ill at all please stay home and be safe. If you don't feel comfortable joining in worship yet we will understand that as well. I will try to record the services and upload them online. Let's try to remain respectful of other's decisions to stay home or join in worship at this time and whether others are comfortable with shaking hands or not.

I know we all want to get back to normal and hopefully getting back to worshipping together will help in that process, but let's remember our primary calling to love God and to love our neighbor. Let's try to keep our neighbors' health and well-being in mind as we begin to worship together again, understanding that this is a challenging and new season for all of us.

It's my understanding that Parade Street usually has church council and trustees on the first Tuesday of the month so that will be Tuesday July 7th.

*God bless,
Pastor Eric*